MARVEL MASTERWORKS®

THE UNCANNY X-MEN®

VOLUME 9

THE UNCANNY X-MEN Nos. 168-175, ANNUAL No. 7,
MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVEL No. 5 & WOLVERINE Nos. 1-4

CHRIS CLAREMONT, PAUL SMITH,
BRENT ANDERSON & FRANK MILLER

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PRESENTS

THE UNCANNY X-MEN

VOLUME 9

COLLECTING

THE UNCANNY X-MEN Nos. 168-175

ANNUAL No. 7, MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVEL No. 5

& WOLVERINE Nos. 1-4

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MARVEL MASTERWORKS
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THE
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NOS. 168-175, ANNUAL NO. 7,
MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVEL NO. 5 & WOLVERINE NOS. 1-4

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INTRODUCTION
BY LOUISE SIMONSON

When Marvel editor Cory Sedlmeier invited me to write the introduction to this collection, I told him I'd do it because this "was a really great period of *Uncanny X-Men*." I knew it, intellectually, but I had forgotten how much fun that run actually was.

Back in the day—we're talkin' 1980—I was asked by Editor-In-Chief Jim Shooter to leave my editorial job at Warren—the independent publisher of the black-and-white horror magazines *Creepy*, *Eerie*, and *Vampirella*—and come edit for Marvel. I was offered the licensed properties, including several *Conan* titles, *Battlestar Galactica*, and *Star Wars*. And, best of all, I was to eventually get the comics written by Chris Claremont—*Man-Thing* (remember him?) and *The Uncanny X-Men*.

In the 1980s, before these massive and wonderful collections, Marvel bound its comics in volumes for the office library. So, in preparation for my upcoming job, I took the bound volumes of *Uncanny X-Men* home to read.

I was living in a prewar building on the Upper West Side of Manhattan at the time. It was a Friday evening. In the courtyard beyond our apartment, someone was throwing a huge party with pounding music. And I had a massive headache. Nonetheless, I figured I might as well get started. With a sigh of resignation, I opened the volume beginning with *Giant Size X-Men* #1, penciled by Dave Cockrum. I devoured it and moved on to *X-Men* #94, then the other Cockrum issues, then raced through the issues drawn by John Byrne.

When I finished, I realized I had spent the last several hours transported into another world. The party noise outside my window had gone away. My headache had faded. I had forgotten to eat. Instead, I had been with the X-Men, involved in their struggles and triumphs, concerned about Jean Grey and the Phoenix power, worried about the machinations of the evil Hellfire Club. It was comic book magic.

It was pretty obvious why *X-Men* was such a popular comic. An editor is, among other things, a first reader… and if she's lucky…a first fan. I got lucky when I was handed the X-Men.

Originally, I was supposed to be given the title after the completion of the spellbinding Dark Phoenix Saga. But, through a series of unlikely events, I joined the team several months early, first co-editing *X-Men* #137, then moving on to issues where Kitty Pryde became the youngest X-Man, then the "Days of Future Past" story where, famously, "Everybody Dies!" And then the wonderfully talented John Byrne left *X-Men* to write, as well as draw, *Fantastic Four*. I was horrified. I knew it was the right move for John but—good grief, what was I going to do now? "I become the editor and, after a few short issues, John leaves?!" I said to myself. "If people quit reading the *X-Men*, I'll know who to blame."

Dave Cockrum came back for a while. He got to draw a major Starjammers arc, showcasing the space-opera characters he'd co-created. And—*whew!*—the X-Men's popularity continued. Thanks to Chris and Dave, the book was as exciting as it had ever been.

Editor-In-Chief Jim Shooter had been encouraging Chris and me to develop another X-Men book—after all, Marvel was in business to sell comics and the X-Men sold! But we were reluctant to dilute the drama of Uncanny. Finally, we suggested a concept that would expand on the idea of the X-Mansion as a School for Gifted Youngsters. Chris created *The New Mutants*, introduced in a Marvel Graphic Novel, which then expanded into a series that would run simultaneously with *Uncanny X-Men*.

SHOOTER PROOFING!

Shooter had very specific ideas about how a comic should be structured. His requirements, as I remember them, were:

Every comic is somebody's first issue. So they need to know who, what, when and where, so they won't be lost. A new reader needs to be brought up to speed as quickly as possible. And it doesn't hurt to remind an old reader what went before.

Within the context of a continuing story—each comic—needs to have that clear beginning, a conflict, and a resolution of at least part of a problem. Shooter explained this in his famous (or infamous!) Little Miss Muffet paradigm for the perfect story:

Who:	Little Miss Muffet
Where:	Sat on a tuffet
Doing what:	Eating her curds and whey.
Intro villain or problem:	Along came a spider
Intro conflict:	And sat down beside her
Build suspense:	And frightened Miss Muffet
Resolution:	Away!

There are three basic conflicts: Man against Nature, Man against Man, and Man against Himself. The most powerful conflict is the internal conflict—"I can't but I must." Man against himself. Shooter wanted one of those in every story. And something should clearly be at stake.

So…Miss Muffet must sit there eating that cottage cheese or she'll starve…but if she sits there the evil spider will poison her. Her life is at stake. What will she choose? In the poem, she chooses starvation over poison. Up to her.

In the Marvel editorial context of the day, checking off all these boxes was called "Shooter-proofing." It meant that your book would pass muster and that you would not be called on the carpet for creating incomprehensible gibberish.

There was a good bit of grumbling at the time, but I thought these weren't bad things to have in a story. And Chris did them instinctively. Or at least, it felt instinctive. Excellent craftsmanship always does.

Pretty much any X-Men comic was a good place to jump on board. And a lot of people did. It was, after all, the best-selling comic in America.

GOD LOVES, MAN KILLS

The graphic novel, "God Loves, Man Kills," isn't "modern." Generally speaking the X-Men books—the graphic novels and "floppies" of that era—aren't. In current parlance, "modern" seems to be a code word for "decompressed," meaning leisurely tales with plenty of pages where people have long conversations and not a lot of happens. *The Uncanny X-Men* of the 1980s were anything but.

Chris's very compressed comics delivered story—*lots* of story. They told you clearly and dramatically what you needed to know to understand what was happening. And if they use more words than is currently fashionable, your 60 cents—or in the case of the graphic novels, six bucks—bought you a whole lot of exciting entertainment.

In *X-Men* comics, even the minor characters, think, feel passionately, question. Sometimes the questions are tragic ones, like that of the murdered child in the opening scene of "God Loves, Man Kills," who asks, "Why?" That short opening was a quick, gut churning introduction to the problem of religious fanaticism and hatred, masked as a holy crusade.

One of the challenges with a team book is that there are a lot of characters to introduce. Chris solves the problem cleverly here, with the evangelist Stryker studying briefing tapes on the X-Men—a device that defines the X-Men from the beginning of the book. Who, what, where, when. By page five, we've met the main characters—good and evil. We know all the basics but why.

And why is what the story is all about.

In an introduction to an earlier reprint, Chris writes that his personal *why* for telling this story comes from a quote by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: "I dream of a world where my children and their grandchildren will be judged, not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

Over thirty years later, some attitudes are beginning to change. Others seem entrenched. In the end, despite all that has happened, Cyclops sees us all as human—the X-Men are just a…"different branch but the same basic tree." But then, hope permeates even the darkest of Chris's *X-Men* stories. It's one of the things that makes them so powerful.

Chris is also known for writing strong female characters. I love that the Purifier Annie, bad though she is, is such a kickass broad. No wonder Chris had such a loyal female audience, even back in the day when "girls didn't read super hero comics." Again, classic Chris!

I also know how lucky we were to have Brent Anderson on this book. His art grounded the story in reality and that made it seem even more powerful.

ENTER PAUL SMITH

About the time "God Loves" came out, Dave Cockrum left *Uncanny X-Men* to draw his creator-owned graphic novel, *The Futurians*. Once again, we had to find a new *X-Men* penciler. That penciler was the superb Paul Smith.

Before coming to *X-Men*, Paul had been an animator, working for Ralph Bakshi on his animated films *Lord of the Rings* and *American Pop*. But Paul wanted to create something—something that would have his name on it. We were very lucky to have him on *X-Men*. He was only there for ten issues, from issue #165-#175—minus #171, which was drawn by Walter Simonson—but he had a huge impact.

Paul was a different sort of artist than Dave had been. His artistic influences came out of animation, and inker Bob Wiacek adjusted his style to complement it. It was, in inking Paul Smith, that Bob's genius for a simple, elegant line became apparent.

SPOILER ALERT! YOU CAN'T MISS A SINGLE ISSUE!

One of the fun things about *Uncanny X-Men*, maybe one of the reasons for its continuing popularity, was that we readers dared not look away for a single issue, for fear of missing something. That was because, in almost every single issue, something momentous happened. Or, at least, Chris made it seem momentous.

There's #168—"Professor Xavier is a JERK!" Kitty Pryde, the youngest X-Man, calls the New Mutants "X-Babies." She is transferred there by Professor Xavier, who considers them a more age-appropriate team. Kitty, who could not disagree more, has the unexpected help of Lockheed, a small dragon who has followed her to Earth.

Meanwhile, Cyclops is in Alaska where he meets Madelyne Pryor—a visual duplicate of Jean Grey. (Can she be the Phoenix reincarnated?) And Wolverine leaves for Canada…and his own mini-series! Couldn't miss that, now could we?

The next issue introduces the Morlocks. Angel has been kidnapped and Storm, who now leads the X-Men, struggles with conflicting urges: to keep her teammates safe vs. her need to lead them into battle—a classic can't/must.

X-Men #170—lots of angst in this one! And the great title "Dancin' in the Dark." (Chris was really good at titles.) This one references Scott's dance of life with Madelyne—is she the Phoenix reincarnated?!—and Storm's dance of death in the Morlock tunnels, as she fights the Morlock leader Callisto—another kickass Claremont broad.

Paul couldn't pencil #171, so I asked Walter Simonson if he would do it. Storm now leads the Morlocks as well as the X-Men and her loss of serenity is affecting her ability to control the weather. And Rogue joins the X-Men. And Illyana draws her Soul Sword for the first time! And in Alaska, Madelyne tells Scott how she is the sole survivor of a plane crash that happened on the same day Jean Grey died. A can't-miss issue, for sure!

Now, in addition to *X-Men*, we have four issues of *Wolverine* in Japan, drawn by Frank Miller. At that time, Frank was the groundbreaking writer/artist on *Daredevil*. Thirty years later, he's the groundbreaking writer/artist/director of *Sin City* and *300*. You can clearly see Frank's influence in the progression of the Wolverine series, in the use of special effects and in the many fight sequences. My personal favorite is a three page silent battle, ending in a very large SNIKT!

And, since it's a Claremont story, there are exceptional women characters: Wolverine's old love Mariko, and the Wild One, Yukio, who are strong in very different ways.

Oh, and Wolvie gets engaged to Mariko. Not to be missed.

The events of the *Wolverine* series fold into *X-Men* #172, with the X-Men coming to Japan for the wedding; Mariko's half brother, Silver Samurai, tries to take control of Clan Yoshida; more hints that Madelyne may be Jean Grey returned; and an out-of-control Storm, teamed up with the wild Yukio, and begins to have fun with her power. But, in the end, she draws lightning back into herself rather than actually fry someone…and nearly fries herself, leaving her hair a singed mess!

Total set up!

The next issue, #173, was a fun one. Wolverine and Rogue team up, Wolverine (silently) fights Silver Samurai, and a mysterious manipulator appears. But the big deal of the issue—the really fun change—was Storm's new look.

Comics is a short form—and we deal in symbols. Storm, the serene, controlled weather goddess, had a billowing cape and long flowing hair. But this wild Storm needed a new look—and she got one. We were expecting outrage! And we got it! We'd done it on purpose, manipulated the symbols so the readers would know at a glance that Storm had changed. Kitty took one look and—like some of our readers—burst into tears!

In the end, Mariko refused to marry Wolverine, but our readers were so outraged by the change in Storm, that they hardly seemed to notice.

#174—"Romances!"—visited the love lives of the X-Men. Lilandra must leave Xavier and return to space while he remains on Earth. Mariko sends Wolverine away. Kitty kisses Colossus! He kisses her back! Scott becomes engaged to Madelyne. And Phoenix appears before Scott's very eyes!

We'd been getting bolder and bolder hints that someone in the background was manipulating the X-Men. Now, in #175—the 20th Anniversary issue—Phoenix attacks and we learn what's really been going on. And, oddly enough, the comic ends in a wedding. It's a double-size issue, and Paul Smith couldn't draw it all, so John Romita Jr. stepped in early, glad to help out, before he took over the reins as the next penciler of *Uncanny X-Men*.

And last, but definitely not least, *Uncanny X-Men Annual* #7, "Scavenger Hunt," is a romp filled with pure silliness, as an alien collects items from Earth's super heroes—including the X-Men—to prove he's most worthy to rule his world.

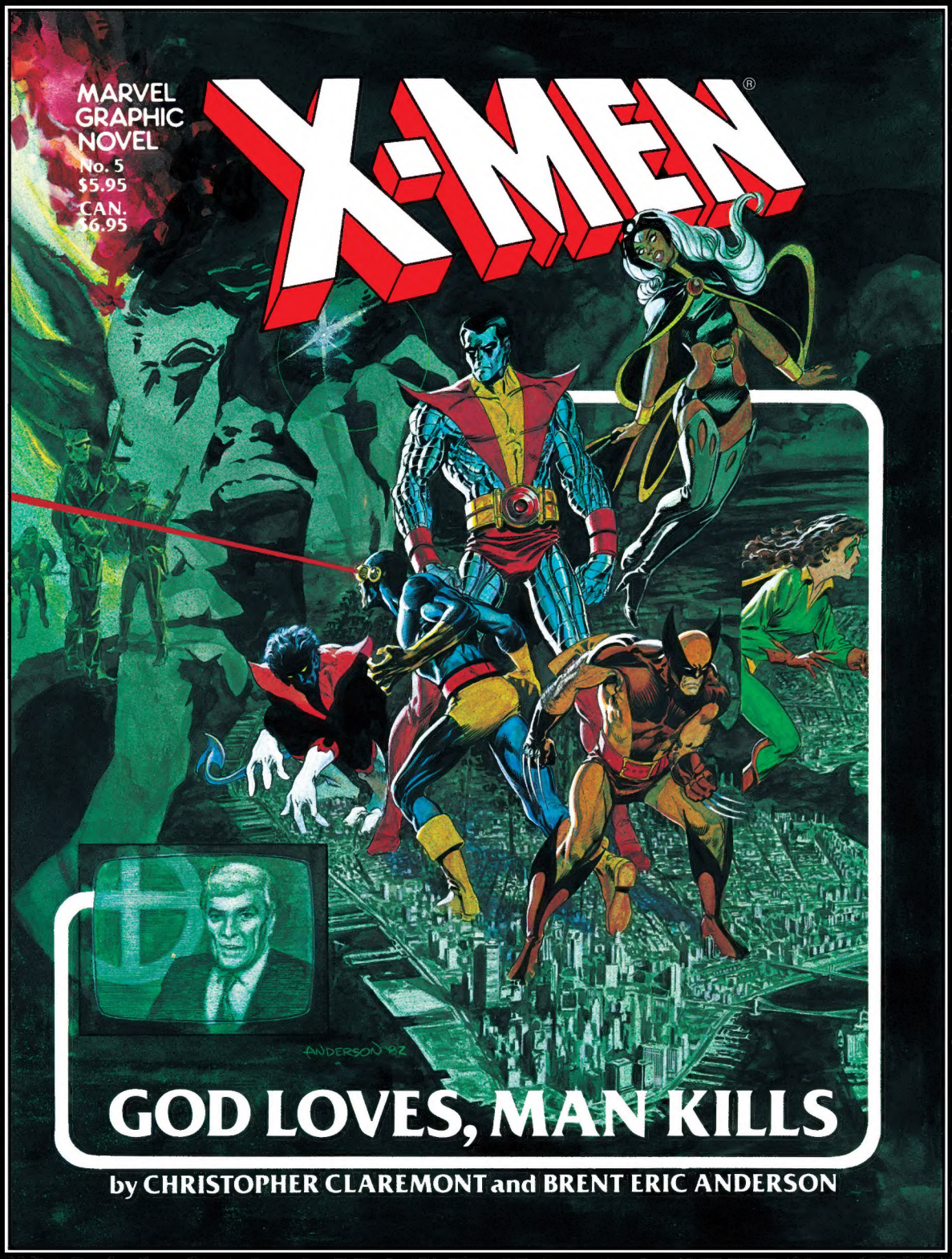
Lots of super heroes pop in, of course, but, in my favorite chapter, the alien shows up at the Marvel offices, hoping to collect Stan Lee himself. It includes cameos of many members of the Marvel staff, including Chris Claremont and even me!

This mad annual was published during Assistant Editors Month—a period when the Marvel editors were in California and our crazy assistants went wild. It features work by a batch of really fine artists, which only adds to the fun. Eliot Brown was my assistant at the time—and he pulled off a great comic! Loved it, Eliot! Thanks!

Revisiting these issues was a blast. Here's hoping you guys enjoy reading them as much as I did!

Weezie Simonson

2014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X-MEN®
ANDERSON '82
GOD LOVES, MAN KILLS
by CHRISTOPHER CLAREMONT and BRENT ERIC ANDERSON

STAN LEE PRESENTS
A MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVEL

GOD LOVES, MAN KILLS

by CHRISTOPHER CLAREMONT and BRENT ERIC ANDERSON

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—Chris Claremont

WESTPORT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL -- WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT...
THEY RUN, WITHOUT KNOWING WHY, SAVE THAT THEY ARE IN PERIL OF THEIR LIVES.
THEIR NAMES ARE MARK AND JILL.
HE IS ELEVEN. SHE JUST TURNED NINE LAST WEEK.
I'M TIRED. CAN'T WE STOP 'N' REST? PLEASE?!
WE CAN'T, JILL. THEY'RE RIGHT BEHIND US!
THROUGH THE PLAYGROUND, SIS -- FAST AS YOU CAN!
WHERE ARE MOM'N'DAD? WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM?!
DON'T THINK ABOUT THEM, THEY CAN'T HELP US ANYMORE.
BLAM!
MARK!
WE'RE ON OUR OWN--
UNNNGNH!
RUN, JILL!
I WON'T LEAVE YOU!
THEY'LL CATCH YOU, JILL! GET OUT--
TOO LATE, KID.
WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE?! WHAT DO YOU WANT?!
WE ARE PURIFIERS.
AND BY NOW, YOUNG MAN...
...OUR INTENTIONS SHOULD BE OBVIOUS.

DON'T CRY, BOY. I'M SENDING YOU TO JOIN YOUR PARENTS.
YOU KILLED THEM!
BOOM!
THEM-- AND YOU.
MARK!?!
MARK...?
WHY?
BOOM!
BECAUSE YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO LIVE.
HOIST THEIR BODIES UP ON THAT SWING-- AND BE QUICK ABOUT IT.
THIS MISSION'S TAKEN TOO LONG AS IT IS.

AND FOR A TIME...
MUTIE
... THE SCHOOL-YARD IS QUIET ONCE MORE.
THE PURIFIERS INTENDED THAT THE BODIES BE FOUND TOMORROW MORNING -- AN EXAMPLE FOR ALL THE SCHOOL-CHILDREN TO SEE.
BUT, LONG BEFORE DAWN...
AN EXECUTION.
NOT THE FIRST, FAR FROM THE LAST -- ONLY THIS TIME, THE VICTIMS ARE CHILDREN.
SO YOUNG...
...SO INNOCENT...
... TO KNOW SUCH TERROR AND PAIN.
THEIR ONLY CRIME -- THAT THEY HAD BEEN BORN.
AND FOR ALL MY VAUNTED POWER, I WAS UNABLE TO SAVE THEM.
NO MORE SHALL DIE -- BUT THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS ARTROCITY! WHATEVER THE COST, HOWEVER LONG IT TAKES, I WILL HUNT THEM DOWN --
-- AND MAKE THEM PAY!!

NEW YORK CITY...
... THE STRYKER BUILDING, HEAD-QUARTERS OF THE WORLDWIDE EVANGELICAL STRYKER CRUSADE.
"IF THERE BE FOUND AMONG YOU... MAN OR WOMAN, THAT HATH WROUGHT WICKEDNESS IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD THY GOD, IN TRANSGRESSING HIS COVENANT, AND HATH GONE AND SERVED OTHER GODS, AND WORSHIPPED THEM, EITHER THE SUN OR MOON, OR ANY OF THE HOSTS OF HEAVEN, WHICH I HAVE NOT COMMANDED...
"...AND IT BE TOLD THEE, AND THOU... BEHOLD IT TO BE TRUE... THEN SHALT THOU BRING FORTH THAT MAN AND THAT WOMAN, WHICH HAVE COMMITTED THAT WICKED THING...
"... AND SHALT STONE THEM WITH STONES...
"...TILL THEY DIE."
Holy Bible
THY KINGDOM COME, LORD, THY WILL BE DONE.
ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.
BZZZZT!
YES?
THE BRIEFING TAPES ARE READY, REVEREND.
THEN RUN THEM, BESS. AND WOULD YOU HAVE SOME SANDWICHES AND FRESH COFFEE SENT UP, PLEASE?
I GOT SO INVOLVED IN WRITING SUNDAY'S SERMON, I FORGOT TO BREAK FOR DINNER.

"SUBJECTS: THE UNCANNY ***X-MEN***, A TEAM OF SO-CALLED SUPERHEROES, WHOSE MEMBERSHIP CONSISTS EXCLUSIVELY OF ***MUTANTS***, PEOPLE BORN WITH EXTRAORDINARY POWERS AND ABILITIES. CURRENTLY, THERE ARE SIX.

"***CYCLOPS***-- CAPABLE OF PROJECTING FORCE BEAMS FROM HIS EYES.

"THESE '***OPTIC BLASTS***' CAN ONLY BE RESTRAINED AND CONTROLLED BY GLASSES OF ***RUBY QUARTZ***.

"***STORM***-- A SELF-STYLED PAGAN GODDESS, POSSESSING THE ABILITY TO MANIPULATE THE WEATHER.

"***WOLVERINE***-- FORMER CANADIAN SECRET AGENT, HIS SKELETON IS LACED WITH ADAMANTIUM, MAKING IT VIRTUALLY UNBREAKABLE.

"RAZOR-KEEN ADAMANTIUM CLAWS RETRACT INTO BIONIC HOUSINGS IN HIS FOREARMS.

"HIS BODY'S MUTANT HEALING FACTOR IS ABLE TO COPE WITH ALMOST ANY WOUND, DISEASE OR POISON.

"***COLOSSUS***-- WHO CAN TRANSFORM HIS BODY FROM FLESH AND BLOOD--

"--INTO SUPER-STRONG, NIGH-INVULNERABLE ORGANIC STEEL.

"***ARIEL***-- ABLE TO PHASE HER BODY THROUGH SOLID OBJECTS.

"***NIGHTCRAWLER***-- IN ADDITION TO EXCEPTIONAL ACROBATIC SKILLS AND THE ABILITY TO CLING TO WALLS AND CEILINGS...

"... HE IS A TELEPORTER.

"THE TEAM'S FOUNDER AND MENTOR, ***PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER***, IS A TELEPATH. THE X-MEN ARE BASED AT HIS SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS IN SALEM CENTER, NEW YORK, WHERE THEY--AND OTHER MUTANTS--COMPRISE THE STUDENT BODY."

NOK NOK

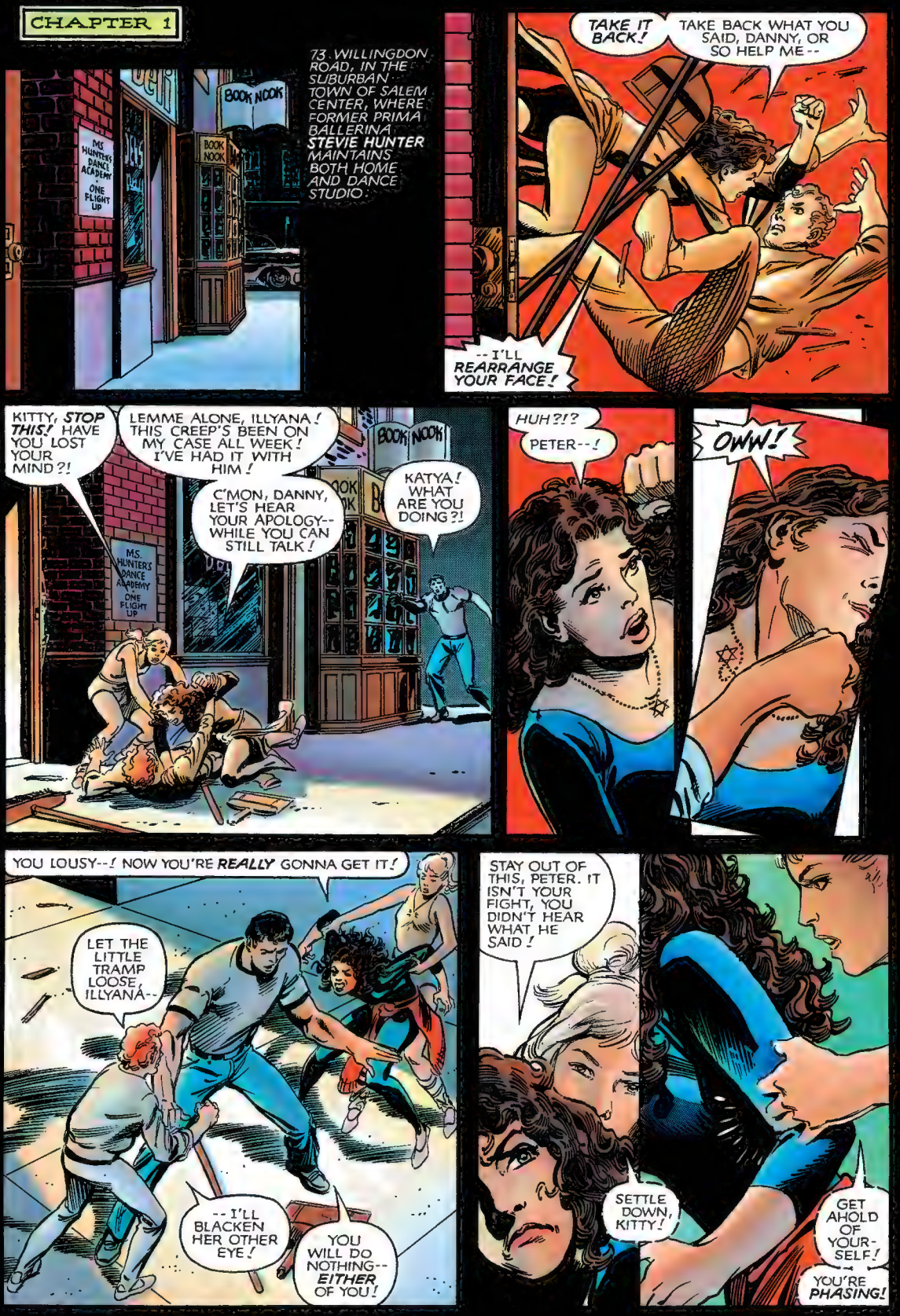
SORRY TO DISTURB YOU, REVEREND, BUT YOU'RE DUE AT THE ABC STUDIOS FOR TONIGHT'S BROADCAST.

THANKS, BESS.

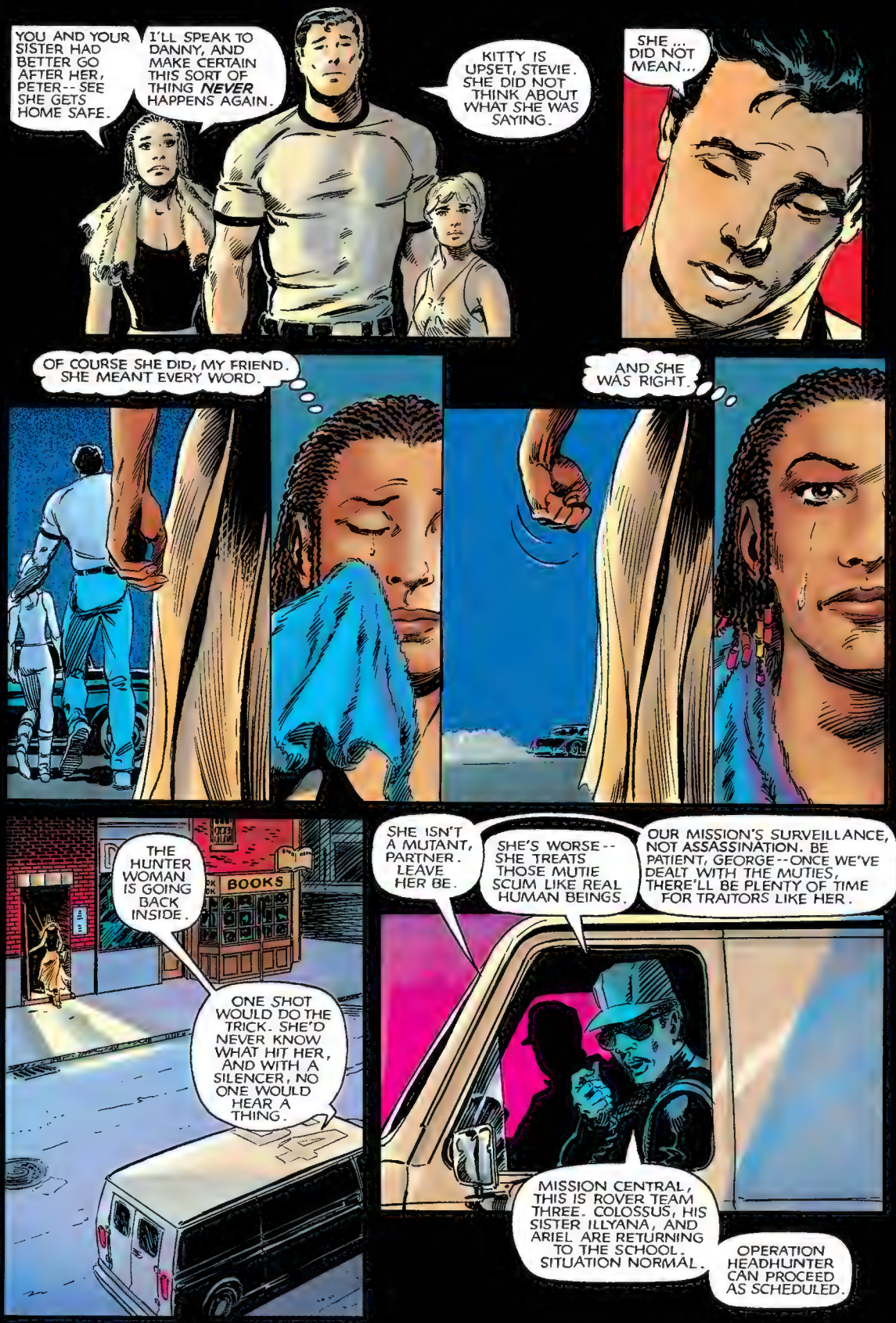
ARE THOSE THE X-MEN?

THEY CERTAINLY ARE. BUT, GOD WILLING, IF ALL GOES WELL...

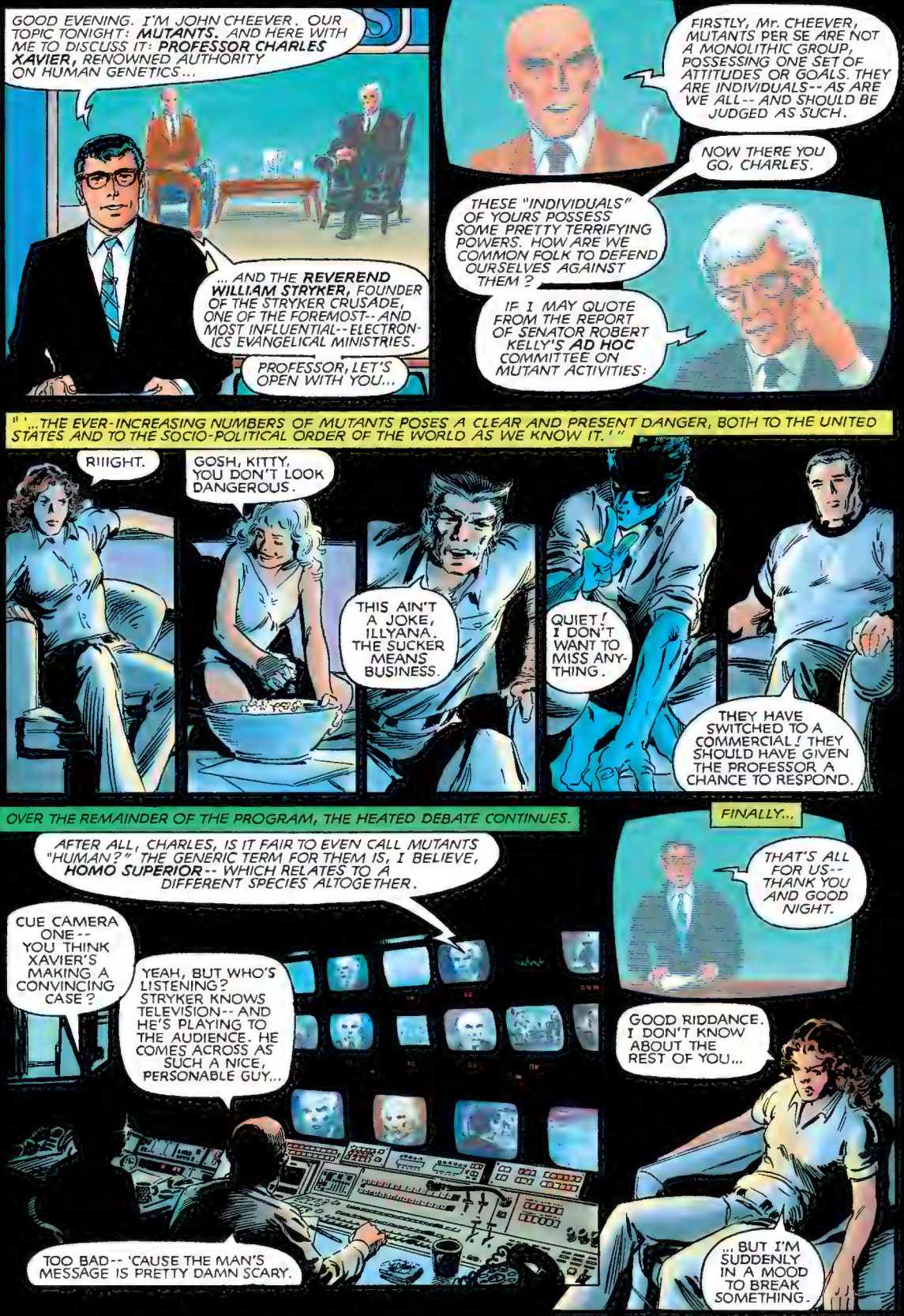
...NOT FOR VERY MUCH LONGER.


CHAPTER 1
73 WILLINGDON ROAD, IN THE SUBURBAN TOWN OF SALEM CENTER, WHERE FORMER PRIMA BALLERINA STEVIE HUNTER MAINTAINS BOTH HOME AND DANCE STUDIO.
BOOK NOOK
MS. HUNTER'S DANCE ACADEMY - ONE FLIGHT UP
TAKE IT BACK!
TAKE BACK WHAT YOU SAID, DANNY, OR SO HELP ME--
-- I'LL REARRANGE YOUR FACE!
KITTY, STOP THIS! HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND?!
LEMME ALONE, ILLYANA! THIS CREEP'S BEEN ON MY CASE ALL WEEK! I'VE HAD IT WITH HIM!
C'MON, DANNY, LET'S HEAR YOUR APOLOGY-- WHILE YOU CAN STILL TALK!
KATYA! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
HUH?!?
PETER--!
OWW!
YOU LOUSY--! NOW YOU'RE REALLY GONNA GET IT!
LET THE LITTLE TRAMP LOOSE, ILLYANA--
-- I'LL BLACKEN HER OTHER EYE!
YOU WILL DO NOTHING-- EITHER OF YOU!
STAY OUT OF THIS, PETER. IT ISN'T YOUR FIGHT, YOU DIDN'T HEAR WHAT HE SAID!
SETTLE DOWN, KITTY!
GET AHOLD OF YOURSELF!
YOU'RE PHASING!

WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON OUT HERE!?!
IT'S KITTY'S FAULT, Ms. HUNTER! SHE STARTED IT!
IS THIS TRUE?
I SWUNG FIRST--
--BECAUSE DANNY SHOT HIS MOUTH OFF ONCE TOO OFTEN!
YOUR TURN, DANIEL. EXPLAIN.
I WAS TALKIN' ABOUT THE STRYKER CRUSADE, AN' ALL THE GOOD IT DOES.
MY FOLKS AN' I ARE MEMBERS, WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?
TELL HER THE REST, CREEP-- ABOUT HOW REVEREND STRYKER'S GONNA SAVE HUMANITY...
...FROM THE GODLESS HORDES OF MUTANTKIND!
WELL, HE IS! MUTIES ARE EVIL! THEY DESERVE WHATEVER THEY GET!
YOU WANNA MAKE SOMETHIN' OF IT, MUTIE-LOVER?!
YOU HAVE BOTH MADE YOUR POINTS, YOUNG MAN. I SUGGEST YOU LET MATTERS END THERE.
RIGHT. HEY, ANYTHING YOU SAY, Mr. RASPUTIN. NO PROBLEM.
NEXT TIME, PRYDE--WHEN "KING KONG" HERE ISN'T AROUND TO PROTECT YOU-- IT'LL BE MY TURN.
THANKS A LOT, PETER.
FORGIVE ME, KATYA.
I SIMPLY DID NOT WANT TO SEE THE BOY HURT.
WITH YOUR TRAINING, YOU COULD'VE CRIPPLED DANNY-- OR WORSE.
HE'D'VE DONE THE SAME TO ME, I BET.
C'MON, LET'S GET YOU INSIDE AND CLEANED UP.
HOW CAN YOU ALL BE SO CALM?! DIDN'T YOU HEAR WHAT HE SAID?!
THEY'RE ONLY WORDS, CHILD.
SUPPOSE HE'D CALLED ME A NIGGER-LOVER, STEVIE?!
WOULD YOU BE SO DAMN' TOLERANT THEN?!!

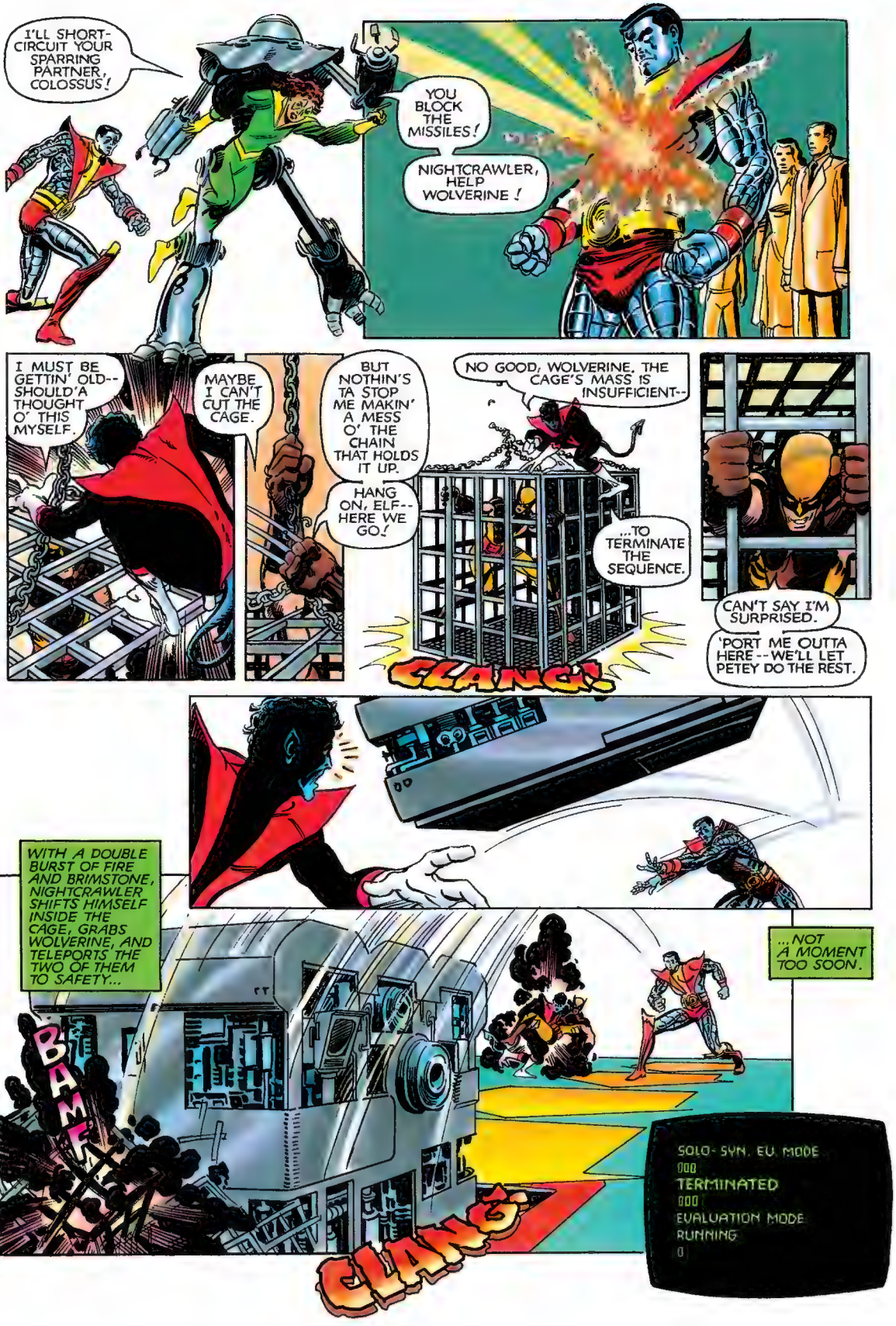

YOU AND YOUR SISTER HAD BETTER GO AFTER HER, PETER-- SEE SHE GETS HOME SAFE.
I'LL SPEAK TO DANNY, AND MAKE CERTAIN THIS SORT OF THING NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN.
KITTY IS UPSET, STEVIE. SHE DID NOT THINK ABOUT WHAT SHE WAS SAYING.
SHE... DID NOT MEAN...
OF COURSE SHE DID, MY FRIEND. SHE MEANT EVERY WORD.
AND SHE WAS RIGHT.
THE HUNTER WOMAN IS GOING BACK INSIDE.
BOOKS
ONE SHOT WOULD DO THE TRICK. SHE'D NEVER KNOW WHAT HIT HER, AND WITH A SILENCER, NO ONE WOULD HEAR A THING.
SHE ISN'T A MUTANT, PARTNER. LEAVE HER BE.
SHE'S WORSE-- SHE TREATS THOSE MUTIE SCUM LIKE REAL HUMAN BEINGS.
OUR MISSION'S SURVEILLANCE, NOT ASSASSINATION. BE PATIENT, GEORGE--ONCE WE'VE DEALT WITH THE MUTIES, THERE'LL BE PLENTY OF TIME FOR TRAITORS LIKE HER.
MISSION CENTRAL, THIS IS ROVER TEAM THREE. COLOSSUS, HIS SISTER ILLYANA, AND ARIEL ARE RETURNING TO THE SCHOOL. SITUATION NORMAL.
OPERATION HEADHUNTER CAN PROCEED AS SCHEDULED.

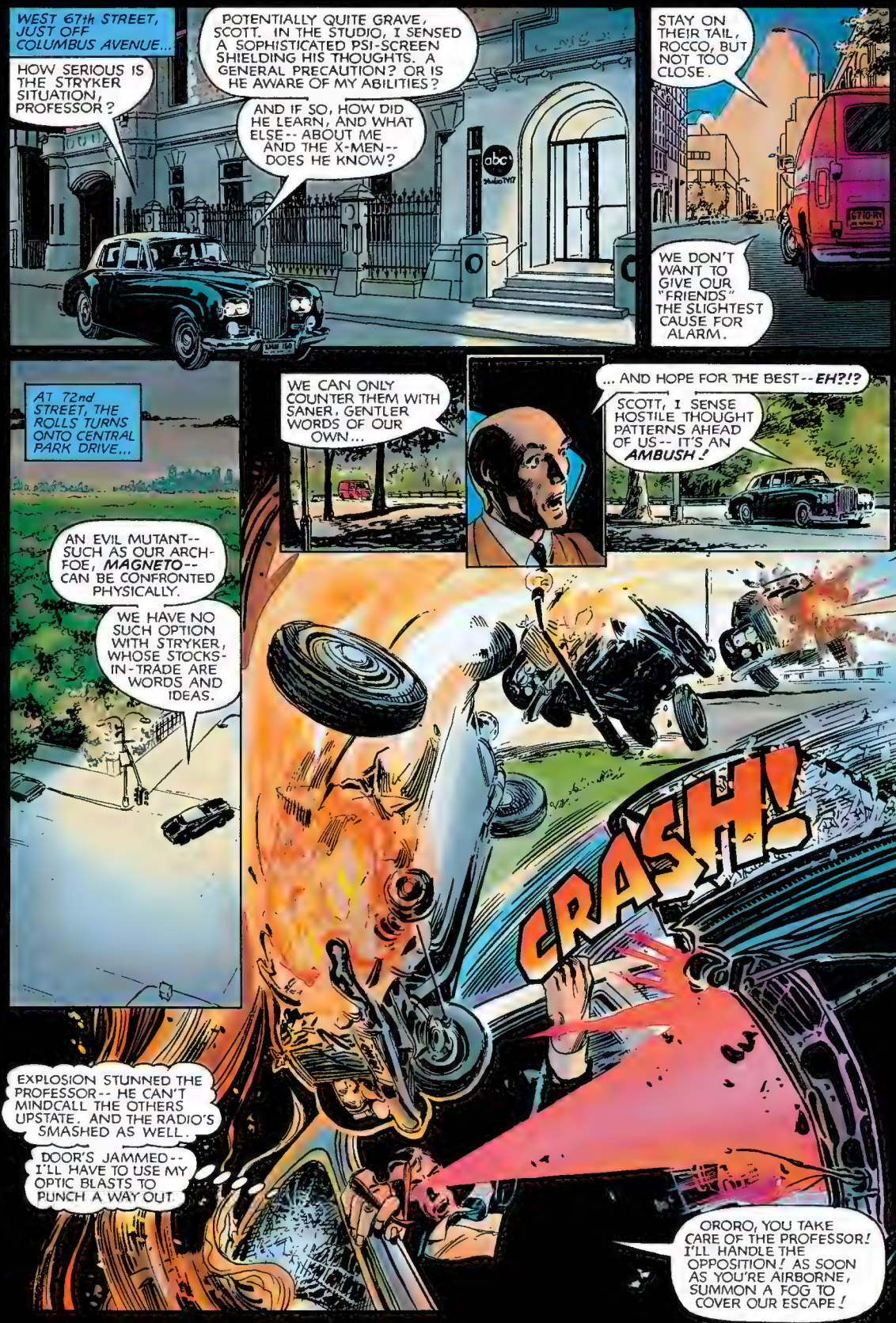
A FEW MILES OUTSIDE TOWN, PETER RASPUTIN TURNS OFF GRAYMALKIN LANE AND UP THE SCHOOL'S DRIVE. THE ESTATE-- SPRAWLED ALONG THREE MILES OF LAKEFRONT-- HAS BEEN IN XAVIER'S FAMILY FOR GENERATIONS AND HAS BECOME A MUCH-BELOVED HOME TO THE X-MEN, AS WELL.
WHAT KEPT YOU, PETER?
WE WERE WORRIED YOU'D MISS HERR PROFESSOR'S APPEARANCE ON TELEVISION. HURRY INSIDE --THE SHOW'S ABOUT TO START!
THAT'S SOME SHINER YOU'RE SPORTIN', PUN'KIN-- SCRAP OR ACCIDENT?
SCRAP.
FAIR FIGHT?
I GUESS SO.
YOU WIN?
NOPE.
HOW COME?
I GUESS I DON'T HAVE YOUR KILLER INSTINCTS, WOLVERINE.
THAT ALL THERE IS TO IT?
I WASN'T FIGHTING AN EVIL MUTANT, OR SUPER-VILLAIN, OR MURDER MACHINE, LOGAN-- JUST A KID WITH A BIG MOUTH. IT WAS NO BIG DEAL.
I'M GONNA WASH UP AN' CHANGE MY CLOTHES. I WON'T BE LONG.
WHILE KITTY'S GONE, ILLYANA EXPLAINS...
THERE IS NO ANSWER TO SUCH HATRED. IT EXISTS, AS WE DO.
BUT FOR SUCH A CONFLICT TO COME TO A HEAD TONIGHT, EVEN-- OR PERHAPS, ESPECIALLY-- IN SO SMALL AND ORDINARY A MANNER... IS THAT AN OMEN?
POPCORN, ANYONE? KITTY?
NO THANKS, ILLYANA.
ABC NEWS
NIGHTLINE
SHUSH, YOU TWO-- THE PROGRAM IS BEGINNING.


GOOD EVENING. I'M JOHN CHEEVER. OUR TOPIC TONIGHT: MUTANTS. AND HERE WITH ME TO DISCUSS IT: PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER, RENOWNED AUTHORITY ON HUMAN GENETICS...
... AND THE REVEREND WILLIAM STRYKER, FOUNDER OF THE STRYKER CRUSADE, ONE OF THE FOREMOST--AND MOST INFLUENTIAL--ELECTRONICS EVANGELICAL MINISTRIES.
PROFESSOR, LET'S OPEN WITH YOU...
FIRSTLY, Mr. CHEEVER, MUTANTS PER SE ARE NOT A MONOLITHIC GROUP, POSSESSING ONE SET OF ATTITUDES OR GOALS. THEY ARE INDIVIDUALS--AS ARE WE ALL--AND SHOULD BE JUDGED AS SUCH.
NOW THERE YOU GO, CHARLES.
THESE "INDIVIDUALS" OF YOURS POSSESS SOME PRETTY TERRIFYING POWERS. HOW ARE WE COMMON FOLK TO DEFEND OURSELVES AGAINST THEM?
IF I MAY QUOTE FROM THE REPORT OF SENATOR ROBERT KELLY'S AD HOC COMMITTEE ON MUTANT ACTIVITIES:
"'...THE EVER-INCREASING NUMBERS OF MUTANTS POSES A CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER, BOTH TO THE UNITED STATES AND TO THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ORDER OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT.'"
RIIIGHT.
GOSH, KITTY, YOU DON'T LOOK DANGEROUS.
THIS AIN'T A JOKE, ILLYANA. THE SUCKER MEANS BUSINESS.
QUIET! I DON'T WANT TO MISS ANYTHING.
THEY HAVE SWITCHED TO A COMMERCIAL! THEY SHOULD HAVE GIVEN THE PROFESSOR A CHANCE TO RESPOND.
OVER THE REMAINDER OF THE PROGRAM, THE HEATED DEBATE CONTINUES.
AFTER ALL, CHARLES, IS IT FAIR TO EVEN CALL MUTANTS "HUMAN?" THE GENERIC TERM FOR THEM IS, I BELIEVE, HOMO SUPERIOR--WHICH RELATES TO A DIFFERENT SPECIES ALTOGETHER.
CUE CAMERA ONE--YOU THINK XAVIER'S MAKING A CONVINCING CASE?
YEAH, BUT WHO'S LISTENING? STRYKER KNOWS TELEVISION--AND HE'S PLAYING TO THE AUDIENCE. HE COMES ACROSS AS SUCH A NICE, PERSONABLE GUY...
TOO BAD--'CAUSE THE MAN'S MESSAGE IS PRETTY DAMN SCARY.
FINALLY...
THAT'S ALL FOR US--THANK YOU AND GOOD NIGHT.
GOOD RIDDANCE. I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE REST OF YOU...
...BUT I'M SUDDENLY IN A MOOD TO BREAK SOMETHING.

ANYONE WANT TO JOIN ME IN THE DANGER ROOM?
SOUNDS GOOD TO ME.
ILLYANA, WOULD YOU SET UP A TRAINING SEQUENCE WHILE WE CHANGE INTO COSTUME ?
BAM!
TAKE STRYKER'S REMARK ABOUT MUTANTS NOT BEIN' HUMAN TO ITS ULTIMATE AN' WE'VE NO RIGHTS UNDER THE LAW.
NO RIGHT TO HAVE ANY RIGHTS. OR PROTECTION.
WE COULD BE EXTERMINATED, LIKE RATS. LEGALLY MURDERED.
IT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE, BUT STRYKER'S SO POPULAR.
MILLIONS OF PEOPLE BELIEVE HIS EVERY WORD.
TO THINK US EVIL, SIMPLY BECAUSE WE EXIST? IT IS MADNESS.
I HAVE KNOWN SUCH FEAR AND HATRED FROM BIRTH...
...BUT TIME DOES NOT MAKE IT ANY EASIER TO TAKE.
THE OTHERS ARE SPOOKED-- WITH GOOD REASON.
I WISH THE PROFESSOR AND SCOTT AND ORORO WERE HERE.
MEANWHILE, ON THE WEST SIDE OF MANHATTAN...
A FASCINATING DISCUSSION, PROFESSOR. I'M SORRY WE HAD TO CUT IT SHORT.
I, TOO, Mr. CHEEVER. I FEAR REVEREND STRYKER MADE BY FAR THE BETTER PRESENTATION.
THIS DID NOT GO WELL, DID IT, SCOTT?
WE WERE SLAUGHTERED, ORORO. CHARLES WAS SPEAKING TO PEOPLE'S IDEALS, STRYKER TO THEIR FEARS. BUT, ON CAMERA, CHARLES LOOKS SO GRIM AND FORBODING-- ALMOST SCARY-- THAT HE ENDED UP MAKING STRYKER'S CASE FOR HIM.
LET'S HOPE THE DAMAGE ISN'T IRREPARABLE.
OH!
MY FAULT, Mr. SUMMERS. I SHOULD HAVE BEEN WATCHING WHERE I WAS GOING.
NO HARM DONE.
IS EVERYTHING READY, ANNE?
WE'LL TAKE THEM IN CENTRAL PARK, SIR.
SPLENDID. OUR PSI-SCREENS PREVENTED XAVIER FROM SCANNING OUR THOUGHTS, SO THE SURPRISE SHOULD BE TOTAL.

I'VE PROGRAMMED A SOLO/SYNERGISTIC EVALUATION SEQUENCE-- TO TEST YOU AS INDIVIDUALS AND A TEAM. YOUR PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IS TO PROTECT THE MANNEQUINOV FAMILY: PAPA, MOMMA, IVAN, AND LITTLE SVETLANA.
SECONDARY OBJECTIVES ARE: WOLVERINE, TO ESCAPE FROM THAT CAGE WITHOUT CUTTING THROUGH ITS BARS; ARIEL, TO USE YOUR POWERS OFFENSIVELY; COLOSSUS, TO DEFEAT THE ROBOT; AND NIGHTCRAWLER, TO MOVE THAT MODULE ONTO THE TARGET GRID. ITS MASS WILL TRIGGER A PRESSURE RELAY AND END THE SEQUENCE.
GOOD LUCK, X-MEN.
YOU'LL NEED IT.
EMERGENCY ABORT
PRESS
THE ROBOT HAS FIRED MISSILES-- HEADING FOR THE MANNEQUINOV'S!
I GOT 'EM, COLOSSUS!
BINGO! MY PHASING POWER DISRUPTED THE MISSILES' ELECTRONIC SYSTEMS AN' SENT 'EM OUT OF CONTROL.
CAN'T PUNCH MY WAY OUT-- FLAMIN' RULES-- MAYBE I CAN PICK THE LOCK WITH A CLAW.
I CANNOT PUSH SO GREAT A MASS, AND I DO NOT KNOW IF I CAN TELE-PORT IT.
HERE GOES NOTHING--!
AARRRGH!
MANAGED TO SHIFT... MYSELF... BUT NOT... MODULE...
STRAIN... SO GREAT-- I WAS NEARLY... TRAPPED IN TRANSITION...
BUT IF I CANNOT MOVE THAT BLOCK, THE TEST WILL NEVER END-- AND WE WILL HAVE FAILED.
THIS IS GETTING US NOWHERE. WE HAVEN'T A HOPE IF WE DO WHAT'S EXPECTED OF US.
GUYS, LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS IF WE CHANGE THE RULES.

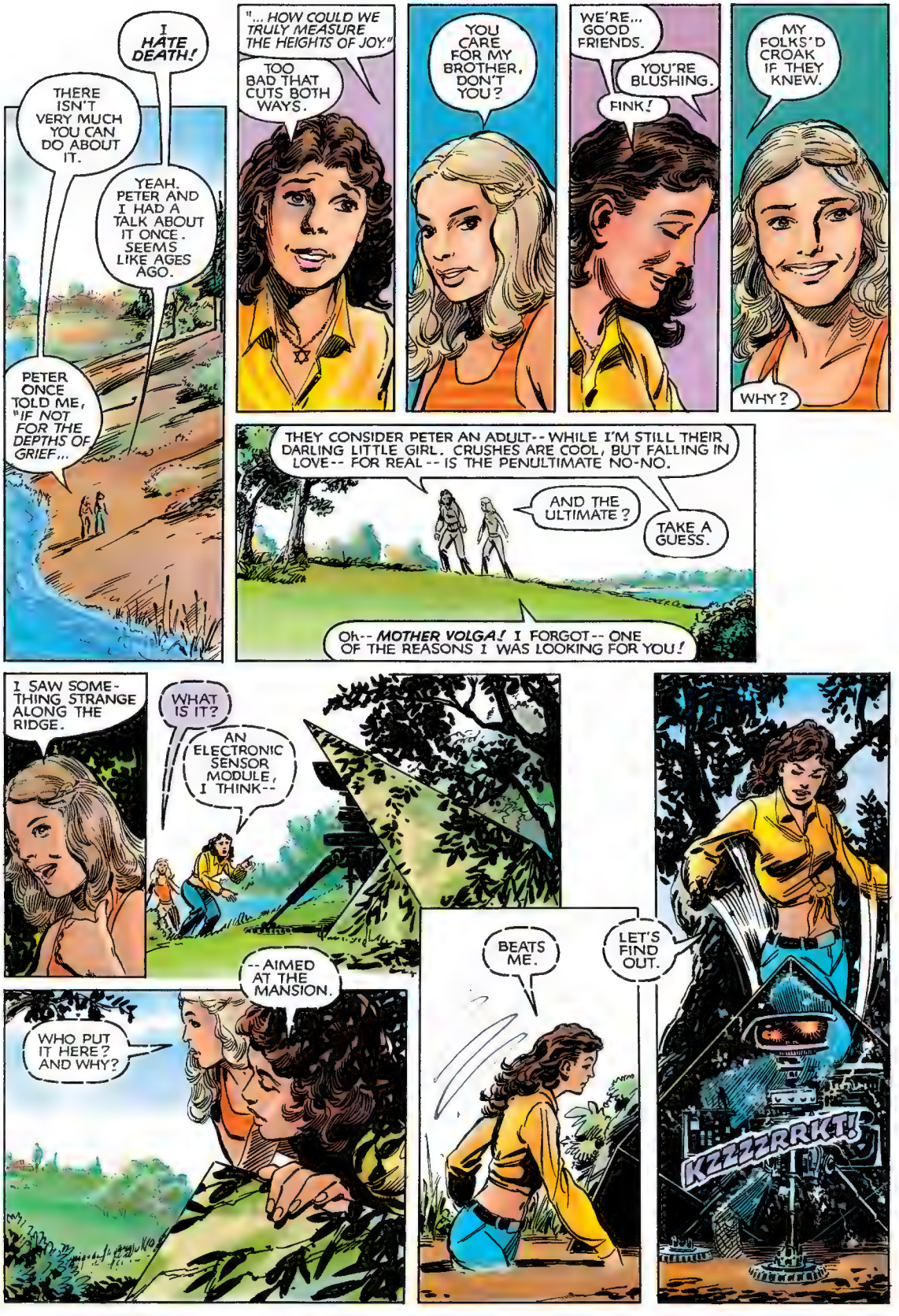

I'LL SHORT-CIRCUIT YOUR SPARRING PARTNER, COLOSSUS!
YOU BLOCK THE MISSILES!
NIGHTCRAWLER, HELP WOLVERINE!
I MUST BE GETTIN' OLD--SHOULD'A THOUGHT O' THIS MYSELF.
MAYBE I CAN'T CUT THE CAGE.
BUT NOTHIN'S TA STOP ME MAKIN' A MESS O' THE CHAIN THAT HOLDS IT UP.
HANG ON, ELF--HERE WE GO!
NO GOOD, WOLVERINE. THE CAGE'S MASS IS INSUFFICIENT--
...TO TERMINATE THE SEQUENCE.
CLANG!
CAN'T SAY I'M SURPRISED.
'PORT ME OUTTA HERE--WE'LL LET PETEY DO THE REST.
WITH A DOUBLE BURST OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE, NIGHTCRAWLER SHIFTS HIMSELF INSIDE THE CAGE, GRABS WOLVERINE, AND TELEPORTS THE TWO OF THEM TO SAFETY...
...NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON.
BAMF!
CLANG
SOLO-SYN. EU. MODE
000
TERMINATED
000
EVALUATION MODE
RUNNING
0

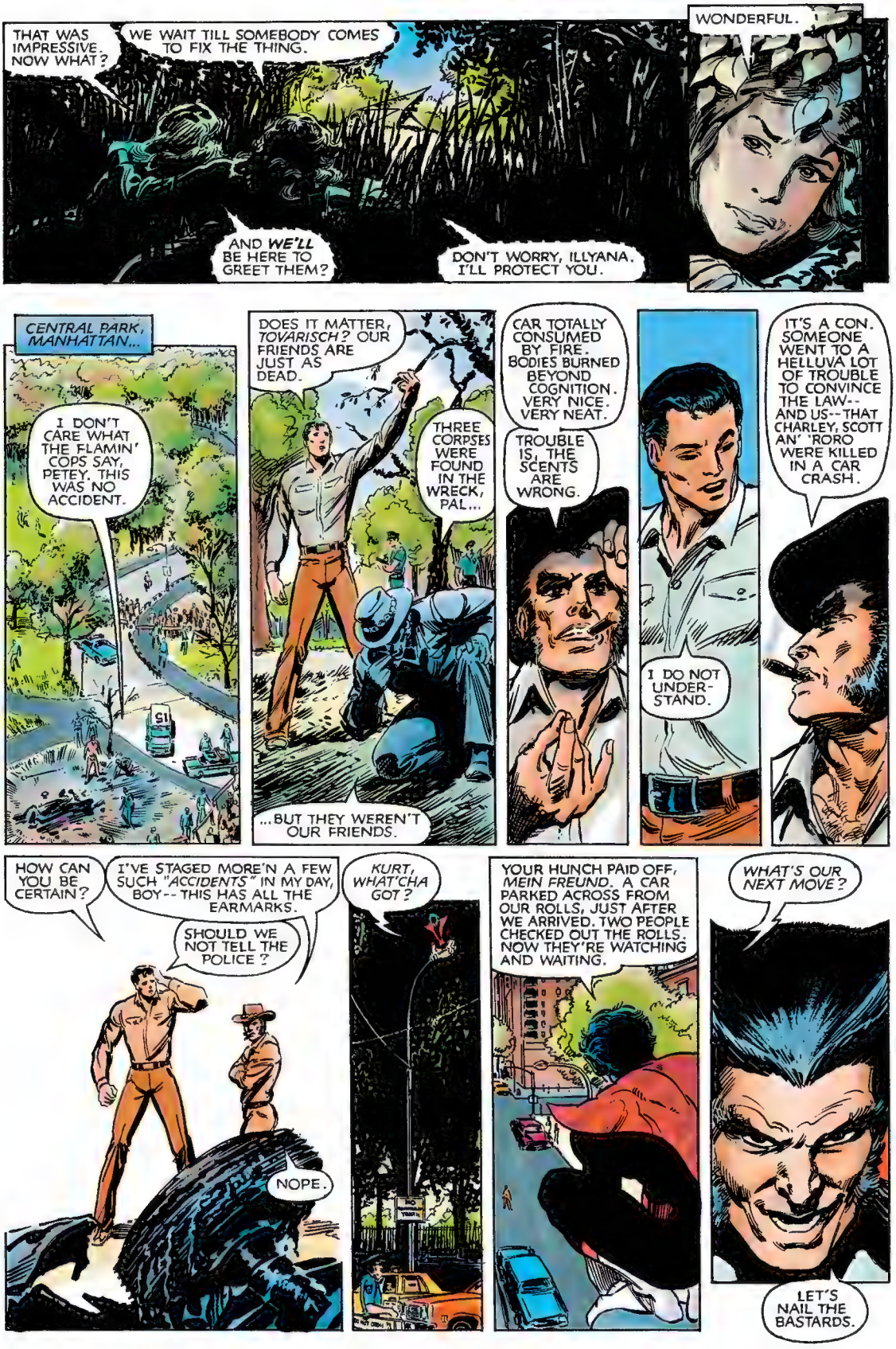

WEST 67th STREET, JUST OFF COLUMBUS AVENUE...
HOW SERIOUS IS THE STRYKER SITUATION, PROFESSOR?
POTENTIALLY QUITE GRAVE, SCOTT. IN THE STUDIO, I SENSED A SOPHISTICATED PSI-SCREEN SHIELDING HIS THOUGHTS. A GENERAL PRECAUTION? OR IS HE AWARE OF MY ABILITIES?
AND IF SO, HOW DID HE LEARN, AND WHAT ELSE-- ABOUT ME AND THE X-MEN-- DOES HE KNOW?
STAY ON THEIR TAIL, ROCCO, BUT NOT TOO CLOSE.
WE DON'T WANT TO GIVE OUR "FRIENDS" THE SLIGHTEST CAUSE FOR ALARM.
AT 72nd STREET, THE ROLLS TURNS ONTO CENTRAL PARK DRIVE...
AN EVIL MUTANT-- SUCH AS OUR ARCH-FOE, MAGNETO-- CAN BE CONFRONTED PHYSICALLY.
WE HAVE NO SUCH OPTION WITH STRYKER, WHOSE STOCKS-IN-TRADE ARE WORDS AND IDEAS.
WE CAN ONLY COUNTER THEM WITH SANER, GENTLER WORDS OF OUR OWN...
... AND HOPE FOR THE BEST-- EH?!?
SCOTT, I SENSE HOSTILE THOUGHT PATTERNS AHEAD OF US-- IT'S AN AMBUSH!
CRASH!
EXPLOSION STUNNED THE PROFESSOR-- HE CAN'T MINDCALL THE OTHERS UPSTATE. AND THE RADIO'S SMASHED AS WELL.
DOOR'S JAMMED-- I'LL HAVE TO USE MY OPTIC BLASTS TO PUNCH A WAY OUT.
ORORO, YOU TAKE CARE OF THE PROFESSOR! I'LL HANDLE THE OPPOSITION! AS SOON AS YOU'RE AIRBORNE, SUMMON A FOG TO COVER OUR ESCAPE!

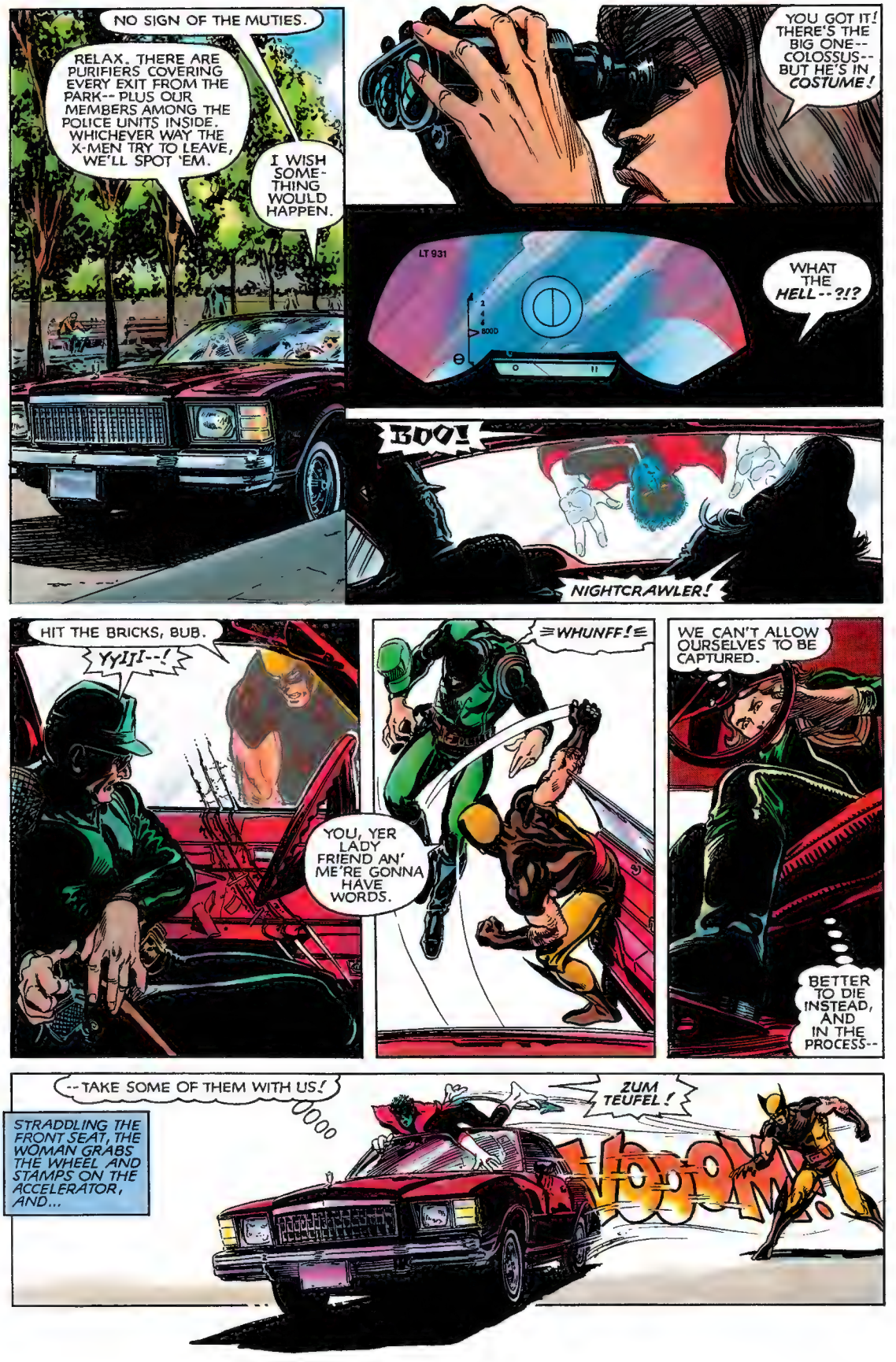
SCOTT!!
KPOW!
KPOW
VROOOSH
WHOOM!
PERFECT.
ROCCO, NOTIFY THE REVEREND: MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.

SOLO/SYN MODE EVALUATION
CODE SOLO SYN TOTAL
ARIEL 98.2 97.6 97.9
COLOSSUS 97.3 96.4 96.8
NIGHT-CRAWLER 94.3 99.2 96.7
WOLVERINE 99.0 99.0 99.0
AAHHH-- THIS WORKOUT WAS JUST WHAT I NEEDED. I FEEL SO MUCH BETTER.
HOW COME SO GRUMPY, WOLVERINE? YOU DID REAL GOOD.
JA, MEIN FREUND-- WHAT'S THE SECRET OF YOUR SUCCESS?
CLEAN LIVIN', O' COURSE.
YOU'RE NOT TAKING THIS VERY SERIOUSLY.
WHY SHOULD I? IT'S A GAME.
AN' GAMES ARE FOR KIDS.
THERE ARE TIMES, GUYS, WHEN THAT MAN SCARES ME SILLY.
BRRRING!
I'LL ANSWER IT. PROBABLY SCOTT, RINGING FROM NEW YORK.
XAVIER'S SCHOOL-- KURT WAGNER SPEAKING-- MAY I HELP YOU?
WHAT--?!?
TORAVISCH, IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?
FUZZY-ELF, YOU LOOK SO AWFUL!
THAT WAS THE POLICE. THERE'S BEEN AN... ACCIDENT.
PROFESSOR XAVIER, SCOTT AND ORORO ARE DEAD.

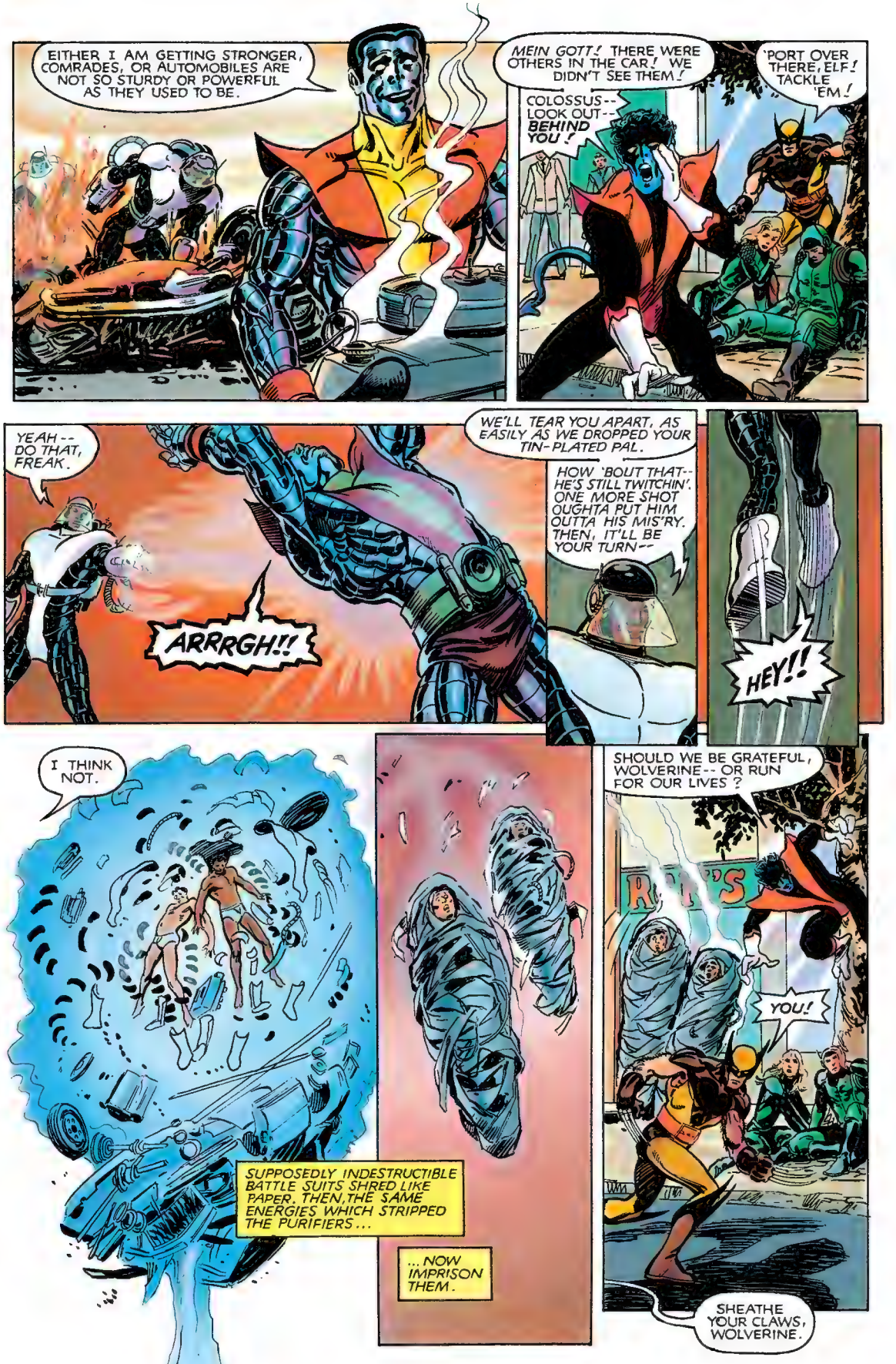
CHAPTER 2
... THE NEXT DAY.
HI!
THE OTHERS HAVE GONE INTO NEW YORK. WE'RE ON OUR OWN.
KITTY... ARE YOU OKAY?
I'M ALIVE. DOES THAT COUNT?
YOU'VE BEEN UP HERE ON THE BLUFF FOR AGES. WANT SOME COMPANY?
IF I HAD, ILLYANA...
... I'D HAVE STAYED IN THE DAMN HOUSE!
KATYA!
WHAT!?!
THEY WERE MY FRIENDS, TOO.
I S'POSE I SHOULD BE USED TO THIS, ACCEPT IT AS A REALITY OF THE LIFE WE LEAD.
BUT AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH, TO HAVE THEM KILLED IN A LOUSY CAR CRASH!
AND THE REALLY CRAZY THING IS...
... I STILL DON'T BELIEVE IT'S TRUE.

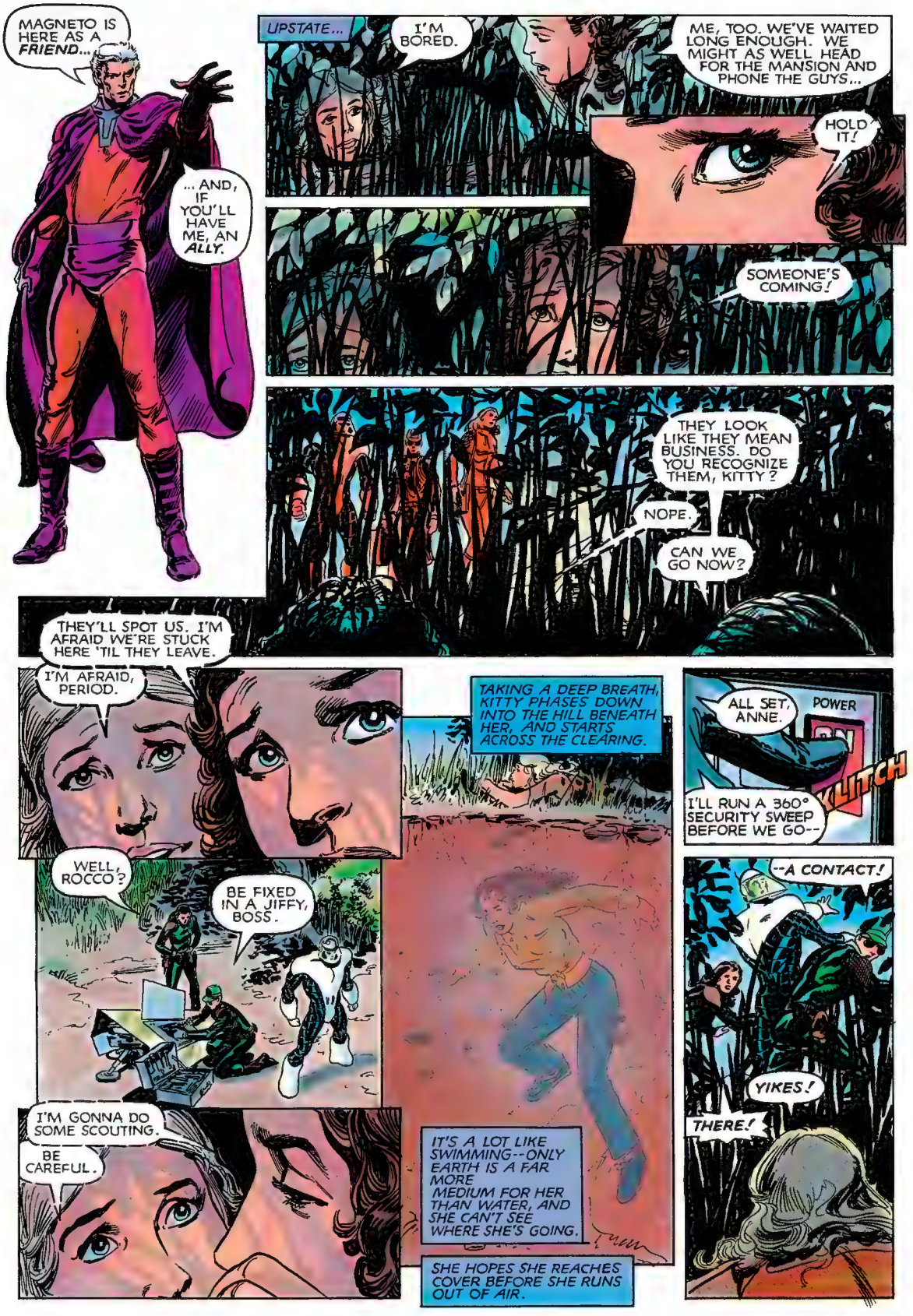

I HATE DEATH!
THERE ISN'T VERY MUCH YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT.
YEAH. PETER AND I HAD A TALK ABOUT IT ONCE. SEEMS LIKE AGES AGO.
PETER ONCE TOLD ME, "IF NOT FOR THE DEPTHS OF GRIEF...
"... HOW COULD WE TRULY MEASURE THE HEIGHTS OF JOY."
TOO BAD THAT CUTS BOTH WAYS.
YOU CARE FOR MY BROTHER, DON'T YOU?
WE'RE... GOOD FRIENDS.
YOU'RE BLUSHING.
FINK!
MY FOLKS'D CROAK IF THEY KNEW.
WHY?
THEY CONSIDER PETER AN ADULT-- WHILE I'M STILL THEIR DARLING LITTLE GIRL. CRUSHES ARE COOL, BUT FALLING IN LOVE-- FOR REAL -- IS THE PENULTIMATE NO-NO.
AND THE ULTIMATE?
TAKE A GUESS.
Oh-- MOTHER VOLGA! I FORGOT-- ONE OF THE REASONS I WAS LOOKING FOR YOU!
I SAW SOMETHING STRANGE ALONG THE RIDGE.
WHAT IS IT?
AN ELECTRONIC SENSOR MODULE, I THINK--
-- AIMED AT THE MANSION.
WHO PUT IT HERE? AND WHY?
BEATS ME.
LET'S FIND OUT.
KZZZRRKT!

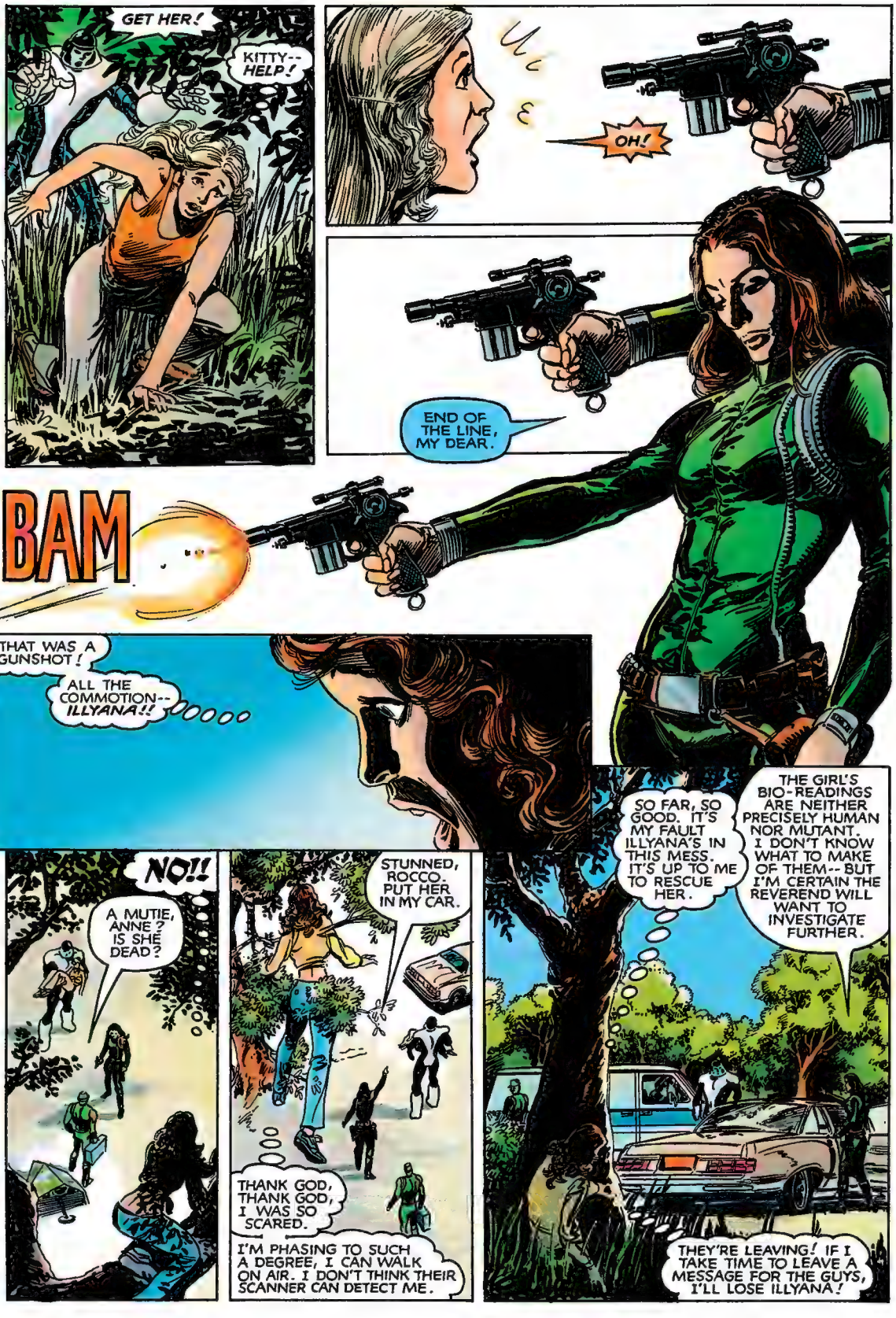

THAT WAS IMPRESSIVE. NOW WHAT?
WE WAIT TILL SOMEBODY COMES TO FIX THE THING.
AND WE'LL BE HERE TO GREET THEM?
DON'T WORRY, ILLYANA. I'LL PROTECT YOU.
WONDERFUL.
CENTRAL PARK, MANHATTAN...
I DON'T CARE WHAT THE FLAMIN' COPS SAY, PETEY. THIS WAS NO ACCIDENT.
DOES IT MATTER, TOVARISCH? OUR FRIENDS ARE JUST AS DEAD.
THREE CORPSES WERE FOUND IN THE WRECK, PAL...
...BUT THEY WEREN'T OUR FRIENDS.
CAR TOTALLY CONSUMED BY FIRE. BODIES BURNED BEYOND COGNITION. VERY NICE. VERY NEAT.
TROUBLE IS, THE SCENTS ARE WRONG.
I DO NOT UNDER-STAND.
IT'S A CON. SOMEONE WENT TO A HELLUVA LOT OF TROUBLE TO CONVINCE THE LAW-- AND US--THAT CHARLEY, SCOTT AN' 'RORO WERE KILLED IN A CAR CRASH.
HOW CAN YOU BE CERTAIN?
I'VE STAGED MORE'N A FEW SUCH "ACCIDENTS" IN MY DAY, BOY-- THIS HAS ALL THE EARMARKS.
SHOULD WE NOT TELL THE POLICE?
NOPE.
KURT, WHAT'CHA GOT?
YOUR HUNCH PAID OFF, MEIN FREUND. A CAR PARKED ACROSS FROM OUR ROLLS, JUST AFTER WE ARRIVED. TWO PEOPLE CHECKED OUT THE ROLLS. NOW THEY'RE WATCHING AND WAITING.
WHAT'S OUR NEXT MOVE?
LET'S NAIL THE BASTARDS.

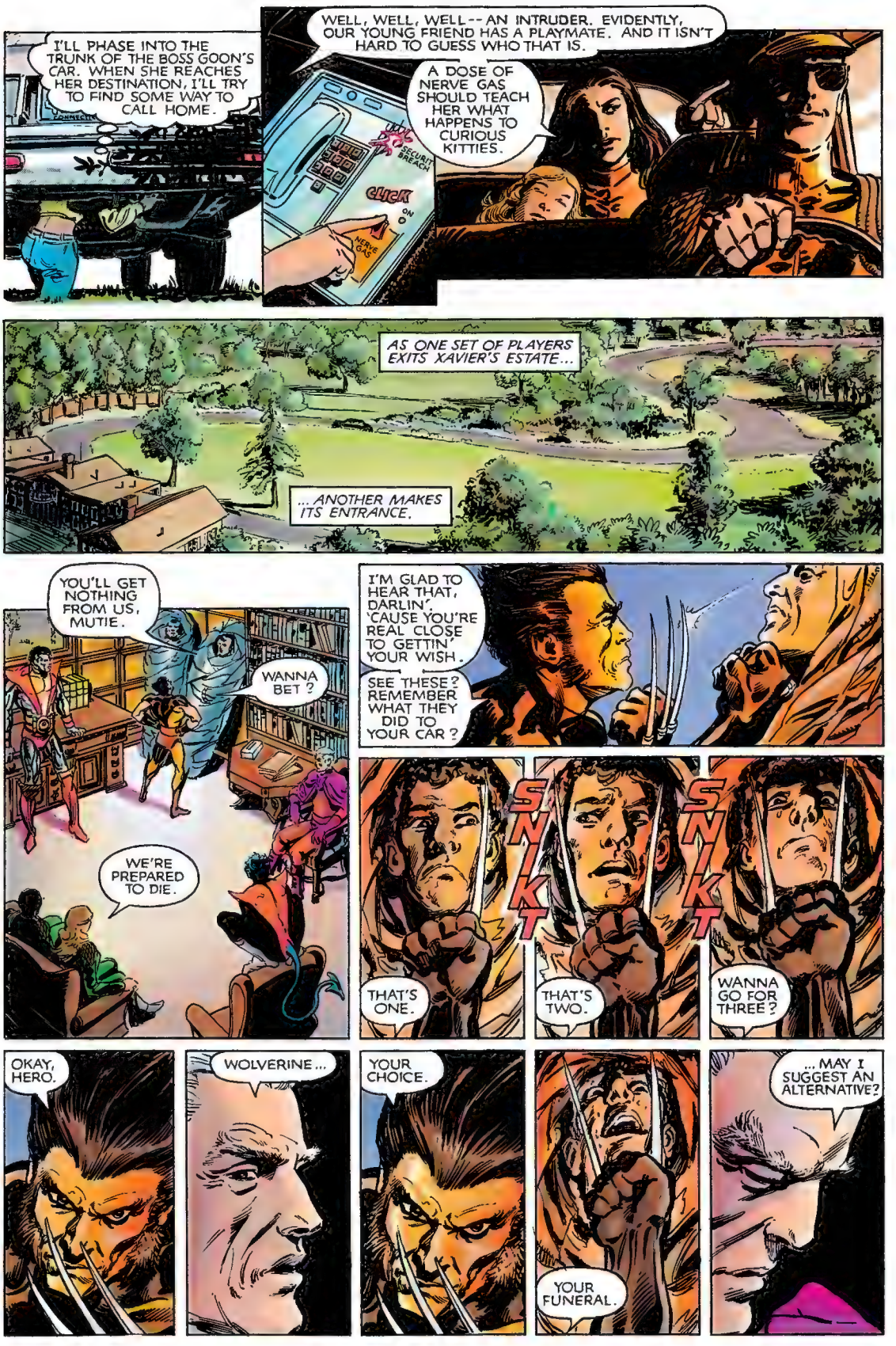

NO SIGN OF THE MUTIES.
RELAX. THERE ARE PURIFIERS COVERING EVERY EXIT FROM THE PARK-- PLUS OUR MEMBERS AMONG THE POLICE UNITS INSIDE. WHICHEVER WAY THE X-MEN TRY TO LEAVE, WE'LL SPOT 'EM.
I WISH SOMETHING WOULD HAPPEN.
YOU GOT IT! THERE'S THE BIG ONE-- COLOSSUS-- BUT HE'S IN COSTUME!
LT 931
WHAT THE HELL--?!?
BOO!
NIGHTCRAWLER!
HIT THE BRICKS, BUB.
YYIII--!
YOU, YER LADY FRIEND AN' ME'RE GONNA HAVE WORDS.
≡WHUNFF!≡
WE CAN'T ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE CAPTURED.
BETTER TO DIE INSTEAD, AND IN THE PROCESS--
--TAKE SOME OF THEM WITH US!
OOOO
STRADDLING THE FRONT SEAT, THE WOMAN GRABS THE WHEEL AND STAMPS ON THE ACCELERATOR, AND...
ZUM TEUFEL!
VROOM

IF I TRY TO EVADE THEM, THEY WILL FOLLOW. ON THIS BUSY STREET, INNOCENT PEOPLE ARE SURE TO BE HARMED.
THAT, I CANNOT ALLOW.
WITH THE SPEED OF THOUGHT, THE TRANSFORMATION FROM MAN TO ARMORED JUGGERNAUT IS COMPLETE.
THE CAR'S BUILDING UP TOO MUCH SPEED.
IF THE WOMAN REMAINS INSIDE, SHE'LL NEVER SURVIVE THE IMPACT.
MY APOLOGIES FOR RUINING YOUR IMMINENT MARTYRDOM, FRAULEIN...
...BUT YOU'RE COMING WITH ME.
BAM!
THIS INTER-SECTION IS MOMENTARILY FREE OF TRAFFIC.
I MUST STOP THE CAR HERE.
AND--I-- SHALL!!
THWAM!


EITHER I AM GETTING STRONGER, COMRADES, OR AUTOMOBILES ARE NOT SO STURDY OR POWERFUL AS THEY USED TO BE.
MEIN GOTT! THERE WERE OTHERS IN THE CAR! WE DIDN'T SEE THEM!
COLOSSUS-- LOOK OUT-- BEHIND YOU!
'PORT OVER THERE, ELF! TACKLE 'EM!
YEAH-- DO THAT, FREAK.
ARRRGH!!
WE'LL TEAR YOU APART, AS EASILY AS WE DROPPED YOUR TIN-PLATED PAL.
HOW 'BOUT THAT-- HE'S STILL TWITCHIN'. ONE MORE SHOT OUGHTA PUT HIM OUTTA HIS MIS'RY. THEN, IT'LL BE YOUR TURN--
HEY!!
I THINK NOT.
SUPPOSEDLY INDESTRUCTIBLE BATTLE SUITS SHRED LIKE PAPER. THEN, THE SAME ENERGIES WHICH STRIPPED THE PURIFIERS...
... NOW IMPRISON THEM.
SHOULD WE BE GRATEFUL, WOLVERINE-- OR RUN FOR OUR LIVES?
YOU!
SHEATHE YOUR CLAWS, WOLVERINE.


MAGNETO IS HERE AS A FRIEND...
...AND, IF YOU'LL HAVE ME, AN ALLY.
UPSTATE...
I'M BORED.
ME, TOO. WE'VE WAITED LONG ENOUGH. WE MIGHT AS WELL HEAD FOR THE MANSION AND PHONE THE GUYS...
HOLD IT!
SOMEONE'S COMING!
THEY LOOK LIKE THEY MEAN BUSINESS. DO YOU RECOGNIZE THEM, KITTY?
NOPE.
CAN WE GO NOW?
THEY'LL SPOT US. I'M AFRAID WE'RE STUCK HERE 'TIL THEY LEAVE.
I'M AFRAID, PERIOD.
TAKING A DEEP BREATH, KITTY PHASES DOWN INTO THE HILL BENEATH HER, AND STARTS ACROSS THE CLEARING.
ALL SET, ANNE.
POWER
ON
GLITCH
I'LL RUN A 360° SECURITY SWEEP BEFORE WE GO--
WELL, ROCCO?
BE FIXED IN A JIFFY, BOSS.
--A CONTACT!
YIKES!
THERE!
I'M GONNA DO SOME SCOUTING.
BE CAREFUL.
IT'S A LOT LIKE SWIMMING--ONLY EARTH IS A FAR MORE MEDIUM FOR HER THAN WATER, AND SHE CAN'T SEE WHERE SHE'S GOING.
SHE HOPES SHE REACHES COVER BEFORE SHE RUNS OUT OF AIR.


GET HER!
KITTY--HELP!
OH!
END OF THE LINE, MY DEAR.
BAM
THAT WAS A GUNSHOT!
ALL THE COMMOTION--ILLYANA!!
NO!!
A MUTIE, ANNE? IS SHE DEAD?
STUNNED, ROCCO. PUT HER IN MY CAR.
THANK GOD, THANK GOD, I WAS SO SCARED.
I'M PHASING TO SUCH A DEGREE, I CAN WALK ON AIR. I DON'T THINK THEIR SCANNER CAN DETECT ME.
SO FAR, SO GOOD. IT'S MY FAULT ILLYANA'S IN THIS MESS. IT'S UP TO ME TO RESCUE HER.
THE GIRL'S BIO-READINGS ARE NEITHER PRECISELY HUMAN NOR MUTANT. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF THEM-- BUT I'M CERTAIN THE REVEREND WILL WANT TO INVESTIGATE FURTHER.
THEY'RE LEAVING! IF I TAKE TIME TO LEAVE A MESSAGE FOR THE GUYS, I'LL LOSE ILLYANA!

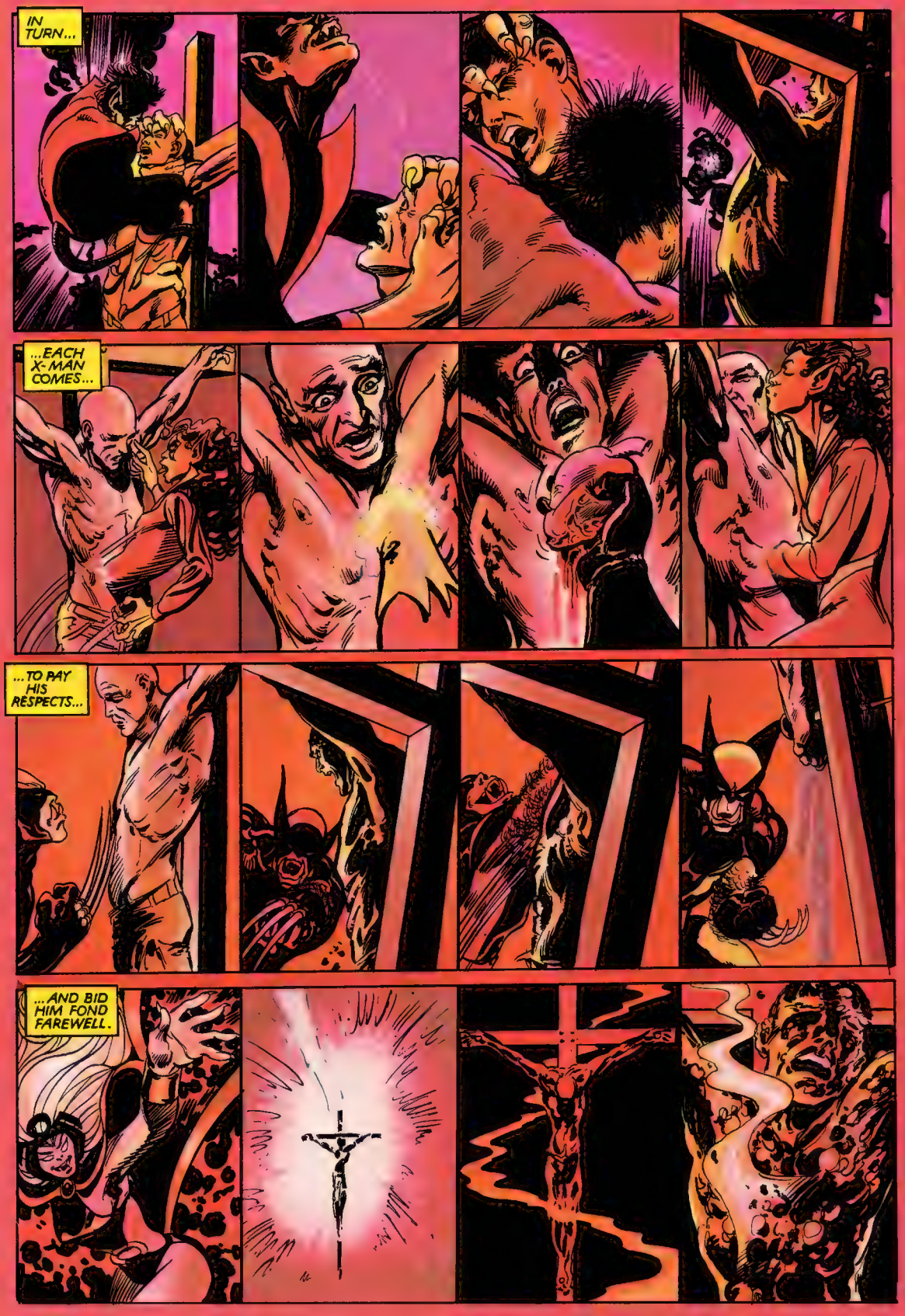

I'LL PHASE INTO THE TRUNK OF THE BOSS GOON'S CAR. WHEN SHE REACHES HER DESTINATION, I'LL TRY TO FIND SOME WAY TO CALL HOME.
WELL, WELL, WELL--AN INTRUDER. EVIDENTLY, OUR YOUNG FRIEND HAS A PLAYMATE. AND IT ISN'T HARD TO GUESS WHO THAT IS.
A DOSE OF NERVE GAS SHOULD TEACH HER WHAT HAPPENS TO CURIOUS KITTIES.
SECURITY BREACH
CLICK
ON
NERVE GAS
AS ONE SET OF PLAYERS EXITS XAVIER'S ESTATE...
...ANOTHER MAKES ITS ENTRANCE.
YOU'LL GET NOTHING FROM US, MUTIE.
WANNA BET?
WE'RE PREPARED TO DIE.
I'M GLAD TO HEAR THAT, DARLIN'. 'CAUSE YOU'RE REAL CLOSE TO GETTIN' YOUR WISH.
SEE THESE? REMEMBER WHAT THEY DID TO YOUR CAR?
SNIKT
SNIKT
THAT'S ONE.
THAT'S TWO.
WANNA GO FOR THREE?
OKAY, HERO.
WOLVERINE...
YOUR CHOICE.
YOUR FUNERAL.
...MAY I SUGGEST AN ALTERNATIVE?

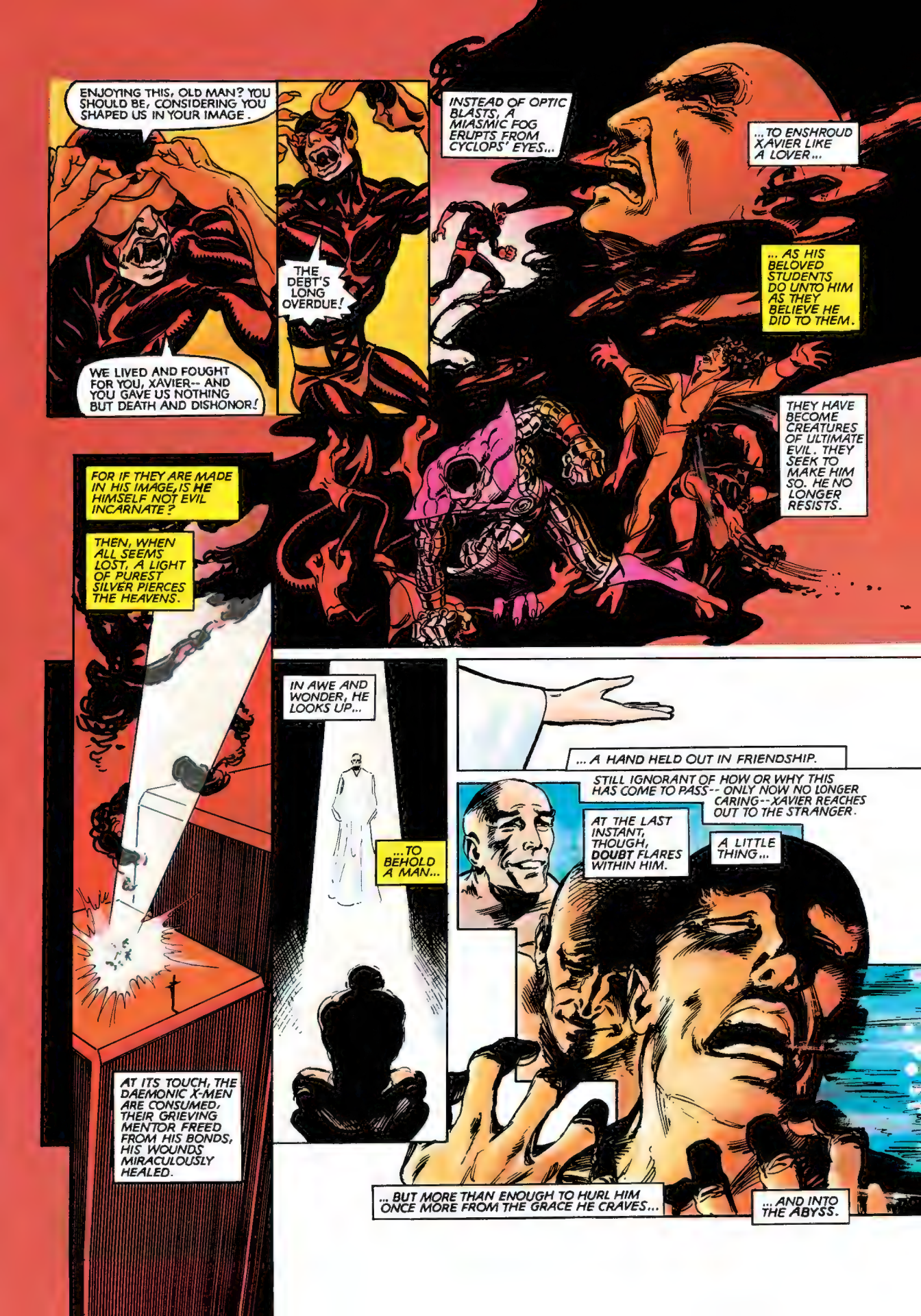
YOUR LUCKY DAY, PAL.
I DOUBT THAT.
I... I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU, MUTIE!
THE PURIFIER RESISTS...
... BUT THE OUTCOME IS NEVER TRULY IN DOUBT.
FIRST HE, THEN HIS COMPANIONS, TELL ALL THEY KNOW.
THEY SERVE THE STRYKER CRUSADE, WHOSE GOAL IS THE COMPLETE AND UTTER ERADICATION OF MUTANTKIND. AND THE MEANS TO ACHIEVE THAT END WILL BE THE MAN WHO HAS DEDICATED HIS LIFE TO CHAMPIONING THE CAUSE OF HOMO SUPERIOR: CHARLES XAVIER.

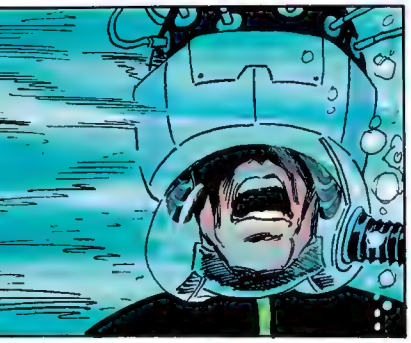
ONCE MORE, GENOCIDE IN THE NAME OF GOD.
A STORY AS OLD AS THE RACE.

WAS THIS... NECESSARY?
YUP.
BUT IF WE USE OUR FOES' METHODS, MY FRIEND...
...HOW THEN ARE WE BETTER THAN THEY?

Chapter 3 :
... THE WORLD TRADE CENTER, MANHATTAN.
"And they bring him unto the place Golgotha...
...and they crucify him."
CHARLES XAVIER DOES NOT BELIEVE THIS TO BE REAL.
THAT DOES NOT SAVE HIM.

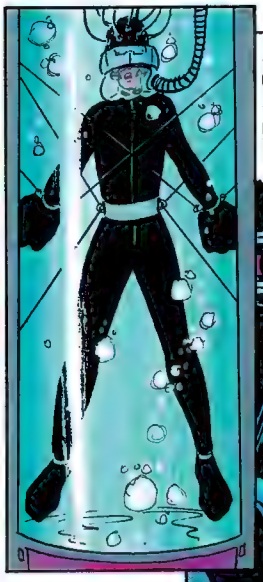

IN TURN...
...EACH X-MAN COMES...
...TO PAY HIS RESPECTS...
...AND BID HIM FOND FAREWELL.


ENJOYING THIS, OLD MAN? YOU SHOULD BE, CONSIDERING YOU SHAPED US IN YOUR IMAGE.
THE DEBT'S LONG OVERDUE!
WE LIVED AND FOUGHT FOR YOU, XAVIER-- AND YOU GAVE US NOTHING BUT DEATH AND DISHONOR!
INSTEAD OF OPTIC BLASTS, A MIASMIC FOG ERUPTS FROM CYCLOPS' EYES...
...TO ENSHROUD XAVIER LIKE A LOVER...
... AS HIS BELOVED STUDENTS DO UNTO HIM AS THEY BELIEVE HE DID TO THEM.
THEY HAVE BECOME CREATURES OF ULTIMATE EVIL. THEY SEEK TO MAKE HIM SO. HE NO LONGER RESISTS.
FOR IF THEY ARE MADE IN HIS IMAGE, IS HE HIMSELF NOT EVIL INCARNATE?
THEN, WHEN ALL SEEMS LOST, A LIGHT OF PUREST SILVER PIERCES THE HEAVENS.
AT ITS TOUCH, THE DAEMONIC X-MEN ARE CONSUMED, THEIR GRIEVING MENTOR FREED FROM HIS BONDS, HIS WOUNDS MIRACULOUSLY HEALED.
IN AWE AND WONDER, HE LOOKS UP...
...TO BEHOLD A MAN...
... A HAND HELD OUT IN FRIENDSHIP.
STILL IGNORANT OF HOW OR WHY THIS HAS COME TO PASS-- ONLY NOW NO LONGER CARING--XAVIER REACHES OUT TO THE STRANGER.
AT THE LAST INSTANT, THOUGH, DOUBT FLARES WITHIN HIM.
A LITTLE THING...
... BUT MORE THAN ENOUGH TO HURL HIM ONCE MORE FROM THE GRACE HE CRAVES...
...AND INTO THE ABYSS.



DAMN! WE NEARLY HAD HIM THAT TIME.

STATUS REPORT UPDATE: SUBJECT SUSPENDED IN ISOLATION TANK, UNDER TOTAL SENSORY DEPRIVATION...



... HIS DISORIENTATION INTENSIFIED THROUGH THE USE OF DRUGS AND DIRECT PHYSICAL STIMULUS OF THE BRAIN VIA IMPLANTED ELECTRODES. MINDWASH PROCEDURES INITIATED FIFTEEN HOURS AGO.

RESULTS...

...ENCOURAGING.

HOWEVER, HIS RESISTANCE IS FAR MORE DETERMINED THAN I EXPECTED.

A LIGHT, PHILLIP?

THANK YOU, REVEREND.

DON'T DESPAIR, MY FRIEND.

WE KNEW FROM THE START THIS WOULDN'T BE EASY.

I'M NOT WORRIED ABOUT BREAKING HIM.

IT'S DOING THE JOB PROPERLY -- WITHIN YOUR TIME LIMIT.

CARE TO SEE OUR OTHER "GUESTS?"

KLIK

THOSE CHAIRS NOT ONLY NEUTRALIZE THE MUTANTS' ABILITIES, THEY PSIONICALLY LINK THEM WITH XAVIER. THE DRUGS WE ADMINISTERED HEIGHTEN HIS PSYCHIC SENSITIVITY TO THE POINT...

...WHERE IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO SCREEN OUT THEIR THOUGHTS.

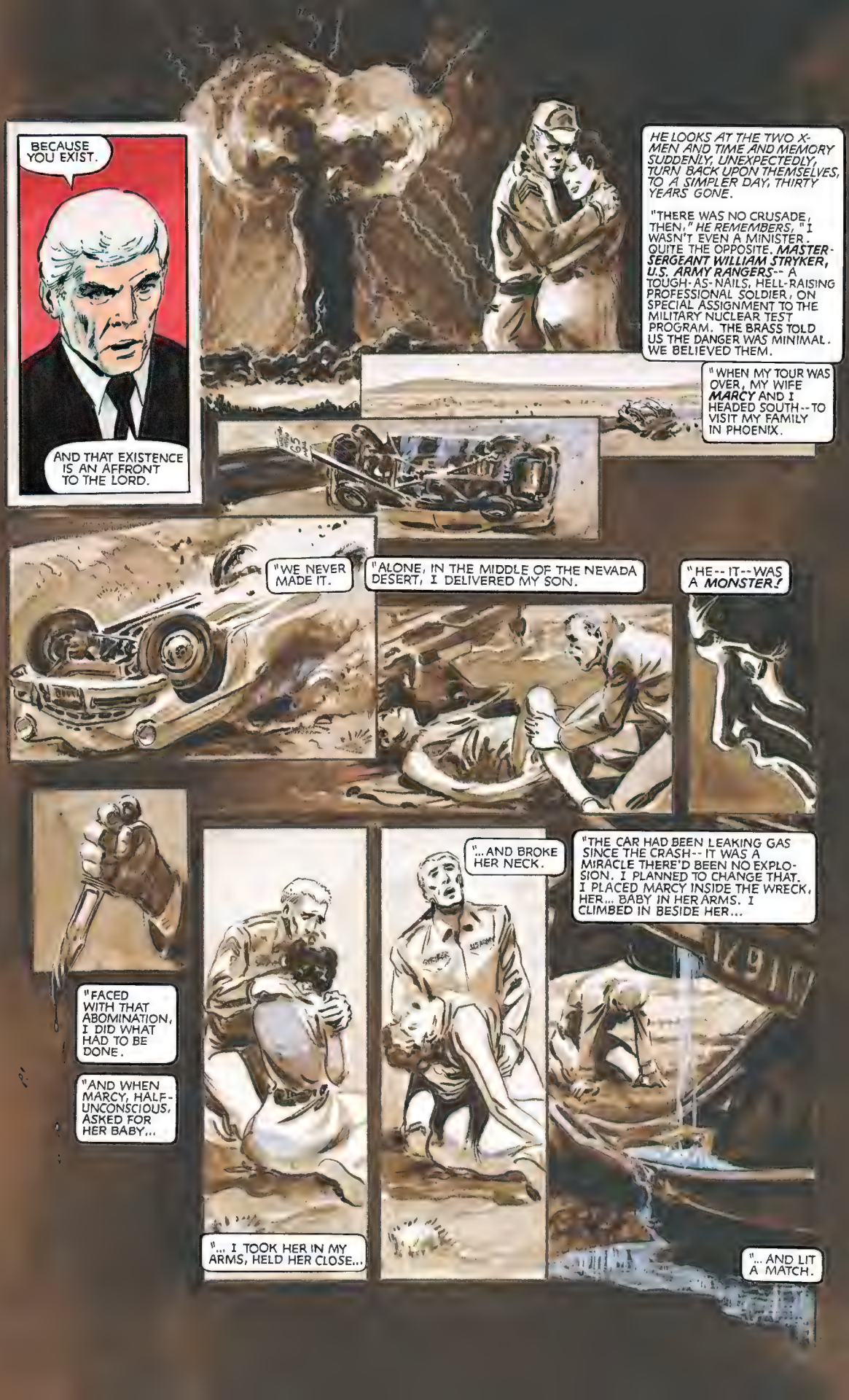
WE TORTURE THEM...

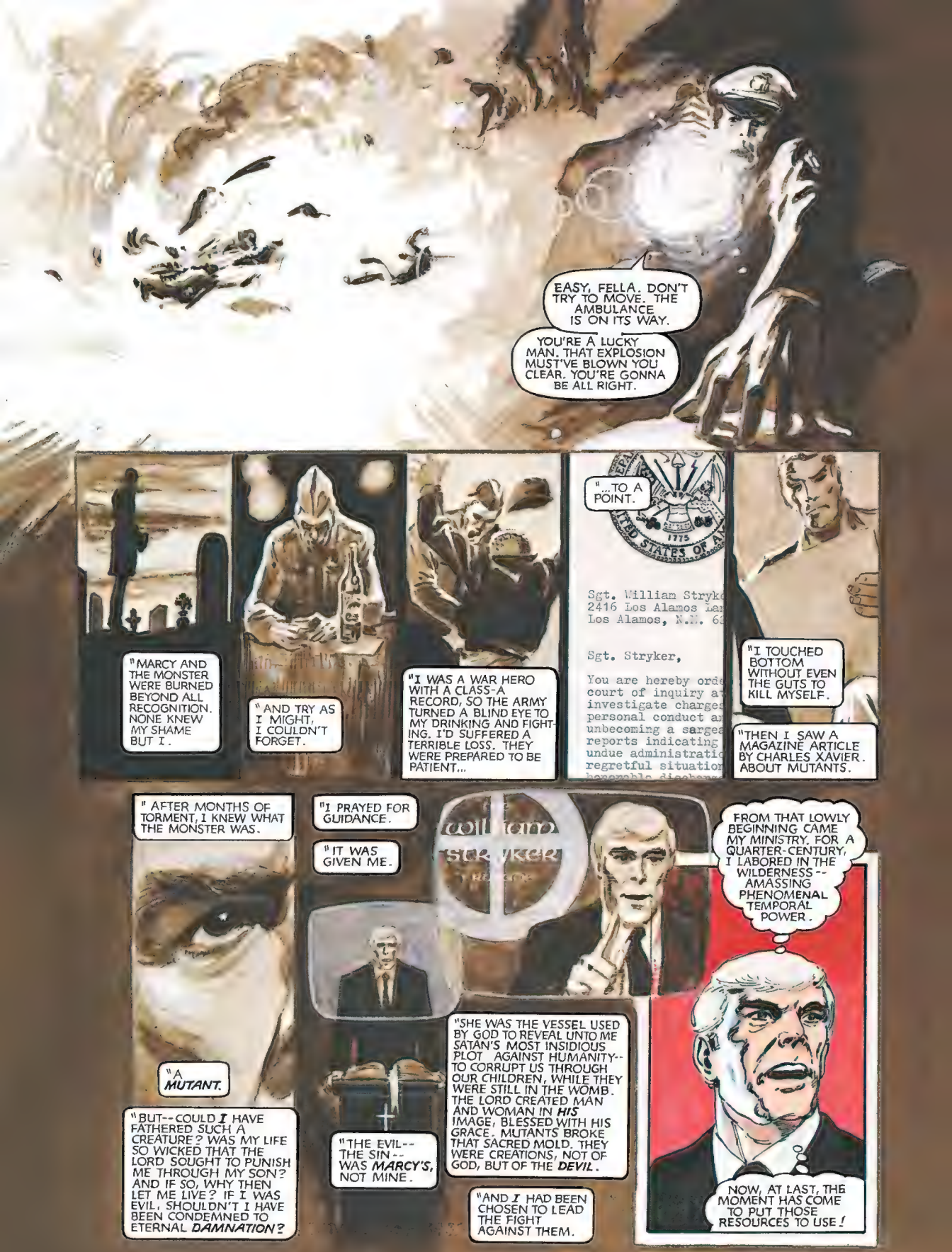
...AND XAVIER SUFFERS.

HE'S AWARE THAT THE PAIN COMES FROM THEM AND IN HIS CONFUSED STATE, BELIEVES THEY'RE DOING IT DELIBERATELY. HIS OWN SUBCONSCIOUS FEARS AND GUILTS PROVIDE THE RATIONALE FOR THEIR BETRAYAL.

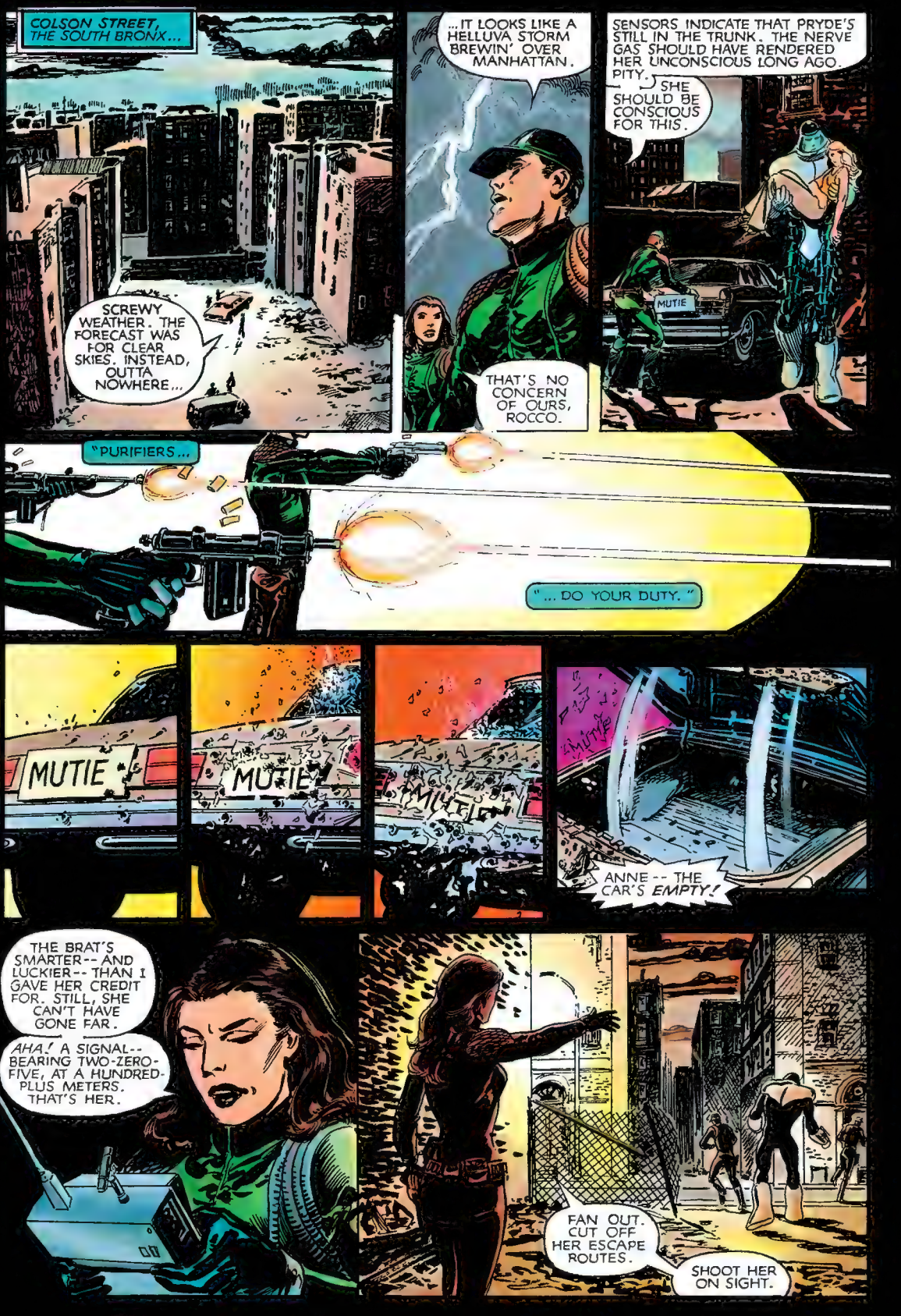
STRYKER!

WE HAVE DONE YOU NO HARM-- WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?!


BECAUSE YOU EXIST.
AND THAT EXISTENCE IS AN AFFRONT TO THE LORD.
HE LOOKS AT THE TWO X-MEN AND TIME AND MEMORY SUDDENLY, UNEXPECTEDLY, TURN BACK UPON THEMSELVES, TO A SIMPLER DAY, THIRTY YEARS GONE.
"THERE WAS NO CRUSADE, THEN," HE REMEMBERS, "I WASN'T EVEN A MINISTER. QUITE THE OPPOSITE. MASTER-SERGEANT WILLIAM STRYKER, U.S. ARMY RANGERS-- A TOUGH-AS-NAILS, HELL-RAISING PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER, ON SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT TO THE MILITARY NUCLEAR TEST PROGRAM. THE BRASS TOLD US THE DANGER WAS MINIMAL. WE BELIEVED THEM.
"WHEN MY TOUR WAS OVER, MY WIFE MARCY AND I HEADED SOUTH--TO VISIT MY FAMILY IN PHOENIX.
"WE NEVER MADE IT.
"ALONE, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NEVADA DESERT, I DELIVERED MY SON.
"HE--IT--WAS A MONSTER!
"FACED WITH THAT ABOMINATION, I DID WHAT HAD TO BE DONE.
"AND WHEN MARCY, HALF-UNCONSCIOUS, ASKED FOR HER BABY...
"... I TOOK HER IN MY ARMS, HELD HER CLOSE...
"...AND BROKE HER NECK.
"THE CAR HAD BEEN LEAKING GAS SINCE THE CRASH-- IT WAS A MIRACLE THERE'D BEEN NO EXPLOSION. I PLANNED TO CHANGE THAT. I PLACED MARCY INSIDE THE WRECK, HER... BABY IN HER ARMS. I CLIMBED IN BESIDE HER...
"... AND LIT A MATCH.


EASY, FELLA. DON'T TRY TO MOVE. THE AMBULANCE IS ON ITS WAY.
YOU'RE A LUCKY MAN. THAT EXPLOSION MUST'VE BLOWN YOU CLEAR. YOU'RE GONNA BE ALL RIGHT.
"MARCY AND THE MONSTER WERE BURNED BEYOND ALL RECOGNITION. NONE KNEW MY SHAME BUT I.
"AND TRY AS I MIGHT, I COULDN'T FORGET.
"I WAS A WAR HERO WITH A CLASS-A RECORD, SO THE ARMY TURNED A BLIND EYE TO MY DRINKING AND FIGHTING. I'D SUFFERED A TERRIBLE LOSS. THEY WERE PREPARED TO BE PATIENT...
"...TO A POINT.
Sgt. William Stryk
2416 Los Alamos La
Los Alamos, N.M. 6
Sgt. Stryker,
You are hereby ord
court of inquiry a
investigate charge
personal conduct a
unbecoming a sarge
reports indicating
undue administrati
regretful situatio
"I TOUCHED BOTTOM WITHOUT EVEN THE GUTS TO KILL MYSELF.
"THEN I SAW A MAGAZINE ARTICLE BY CHARLES XAVIER. ABOUT MUTANTS.
"AFTER MONTHS OF TORMENT, I KNEW WHAT THE MONSTER WAS.
"A MUTANT.
"BUT--COULD I HAVE FATHERED SUCH A CREATURE? WAS MY LIFE SO WICKED THAT THE LORD SOUGHT TO PUNISH ME THROUGH MY SON? AND IF SO, WHY THEN LET ME LIVE? IF I WAS EVIL, SHOULDN'T I HAVE BEEN CONDEMNED TO ETERNAL DAMNATION?
"I PRAYED FOR GUIDANCE.
"IT WAS GIVEN ME.
"THE EVIL--THE SIN--WAS MARCY'S, NOT MINE.
"SHE WAS THE VESSEL USED BY GOD TO REVEAL UNTO ME SATAN'S MOST INSIDIOUS PLOT AGAINST HUMANITY--TO CORRUPT US THROUGH OUR CHILDREN, WHILE THEY WERE STILL IN THE WOMB. THE LORD CREATED MAN AND WOMAN IN HIS IMAGE, BLESSED WITH HIS GRACE. MUTANTS BROKE THAT SACRED MOLD. THEY WERE CREATIONS, NOT OF GOD, BUT OF THE DEVIL.
"AND I HAD BEEN CHOSEN TO LEAD THE FIGHT AGAINST THEM.
FROM THAT LOWLY BEGINNING CAME MY MINISTRY. FOR A QUARTER-CENTURY, I LABORED IN THE WILDERNESS--AMASSING PHENOMENAL TEMPORAL POWER.
NOW, AT LAST, THE MOMENT HAS COME TO PUT THOSE RESOURCES TO USE!

XAVIER INITIALLY FOUNDED YOUR GROUP...
... UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. HIS LIASON WAS FBI AGENT FRED DUNCAN. A SENIOR OFFICIAL OF THE BUREAU--A DEVOTED MEMBER OF THE CRUSADE--PASSED COPIES OF DUNCAN'S FILES ON TO ME.
THE MORE I LEARNED OF YOUR MENTOR, THE MORE CONVINCED I BECAME THAT HE IS THE ANTICHRIST --THE SUPPOSED FRIEND OF MANKIND, WHO WILL LEAD US INSTEAD TO OUR DESTRUCTION.
HOW DID YOU LEARN OF THE X-MEN?
I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND. IF WE'RE SUCH A THREAT, WHY HAVEN'T YOU KILLED US?
I HAVE MY REASONS, YOUNG MAN.
WHICH YOU'LL LEARN SOON ENOUGH.
TO YOUR REGRET.
BZZT!
YES?
ANNE HERE, REVEREND, EN ROUTE FROM XAVIER'S SCHOOL, REQUESTING INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING MY PRISONERS.
I TRUST YOUR JUDGEMENT ABOUT COLOSSUS' SISTER.
AND THE PRYDE GIRL?
KILL HER.
NO! SHE'S ONLY A CHILD!
"WHEN THE LORD THY GOD SHALL DELIVER THEM BEFORE THEE, THOU SHALT SMITE THEM...
"...AND UTTERLY DESTROY THEM; THOU SHALL MAKE NO COVENANT WITH THEM, NOR SHOW MERCY UNTO THEM."
CONTINUE, PHILLIP. IT'S GETTING LATE.
KITTY!
THUMP!


COLSON STREET, THE SOUTH BRONX...
SCREWY WEATHER. THE FORECAST WAS FOR CLEAR SKIES. INSTEAD, OUTTA NOWHERE...
...IT LOOKS LIKE A HELLUVA STORM BREWIN' OVER MANHATTAN.
THAT'S NO CONCERN OF OURS, ROCCO.
SENSORS INDICATE THAT PRYDE'S STILL IN THE TRUNK. THE NERVE GAS SHOULD HAVE RENDERED HER UNCONSCIOUS LONG AGO.
PITY.
SHE SHOULD BE CONSCIOUS FOR THIS.
MUTIE
"PURIFIERS...
"... DO YOUR DUTY."
MUTIE
MUTIE
MUTIE
MUTIE
ANNE -- THE CAR'S EMPTY!
THE BRAT'S SMARTER -- AND LUCKIER -- THAN I GAVE HER CREDIT FOR. STILL, SHE CAN'T HAVE GONE FAR.
AHA! A SIGNAL -- BEARING TWO-ZERO-FIVE, AT A HUNDRED-PLUS METERS. THAT'S HER.
FAN OUT. CUT OFF HER ESCAPE ROUTES.
SHOOT HER ON SIGHT.

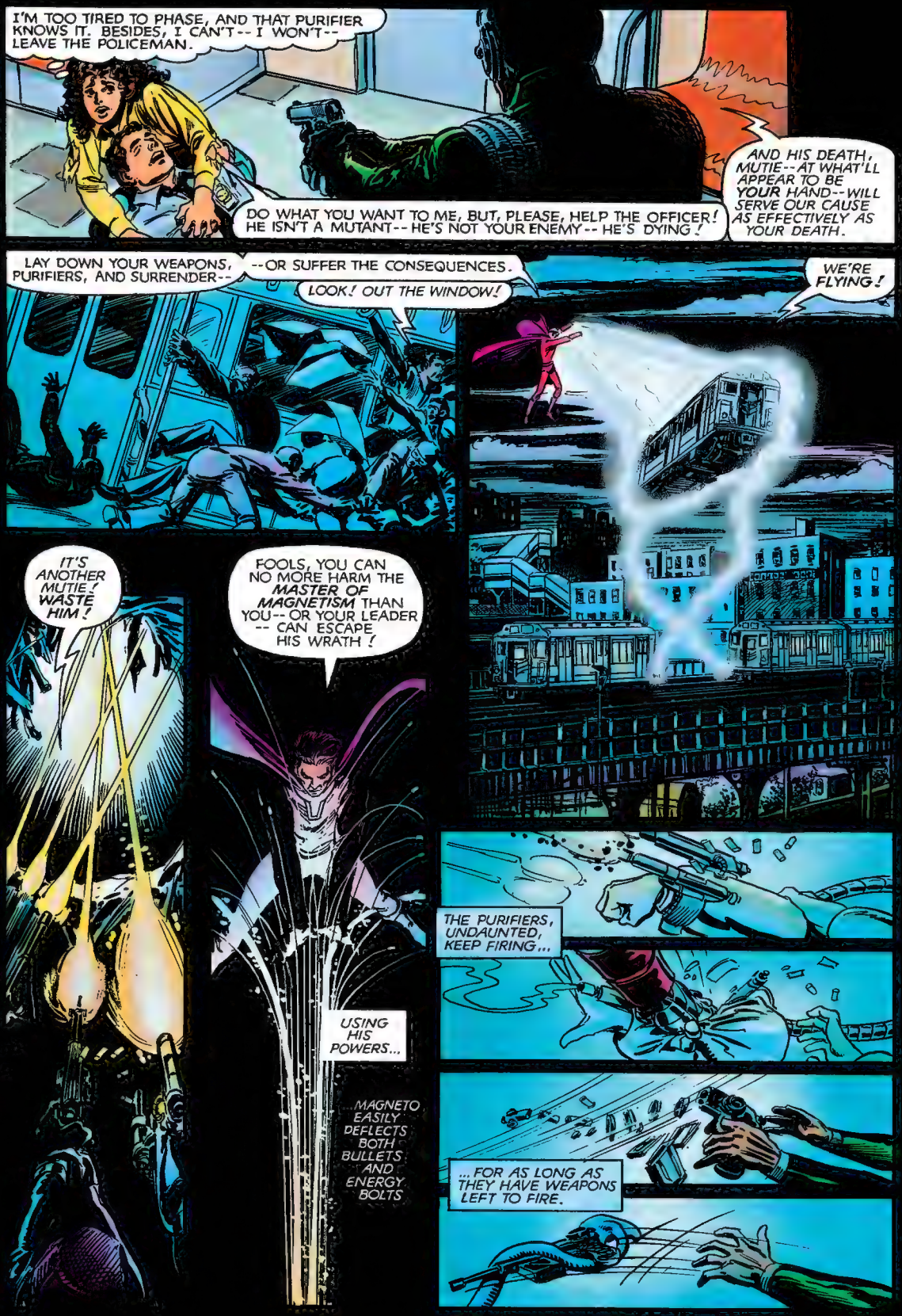
IT'S SO DARK! EVEN WITH A FULL MOON, I CAN HARDLY SEE WHERE I'M GOING.
OUCH!
I PHASED THE INSTANT I HEARD THE GAS JETS, BUT I THINK SOME OF IT GOT ME. I FEEL AWFUL.
I CAN HARDLY CONCENTRATE ENOUGH TO WALK, MUCH LESS PHASE. AND FOR ALL THE HELP I'M LIKELY TO FIND IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD, I MIGHT AS WELL BE ON THE MOON.
SOME GREAT RESCUE THIS IS TURNING OUT TO BE -- I HOPE ILLYANA'S OKAY.
WHAT'S THAT--?!
OBOY! A FIRE! PEOPLE!
HELP ME, PLEASE! THEY'RE AFTER ME!
HELP!
HEY, BRO'-- COMP'NY.

YOU WAN' HELP, CHICA, WE BE GLAD TO 'BLIGE.
HEY, uh, MY MISTAKE. SORRY, FELLAS.
I'LL JUST BE ON MY WAY.
LEGGO!
I CAN'T PHASE! HE GOT ME!
LEAVIN', LI'L ONE?
YOU WAN' PROTECTION, IT'S YOURS. WE DO THIS FOR YOU, YOU DO SOMETHIN' NICE FOR US, RIGHT?
WRONG.
SHE'S MINE.
BACK OFF, NICE'N'SLOW. ANYONE STUPID ENOUGH TO TRY SOMETHING WON'T LIVE TO REGRET IT.
THIS OUR TURF, WOMAN. YOU DON' GIVE NO ORDERS HERE.
THIS GUN SAYS DIFFERENT.

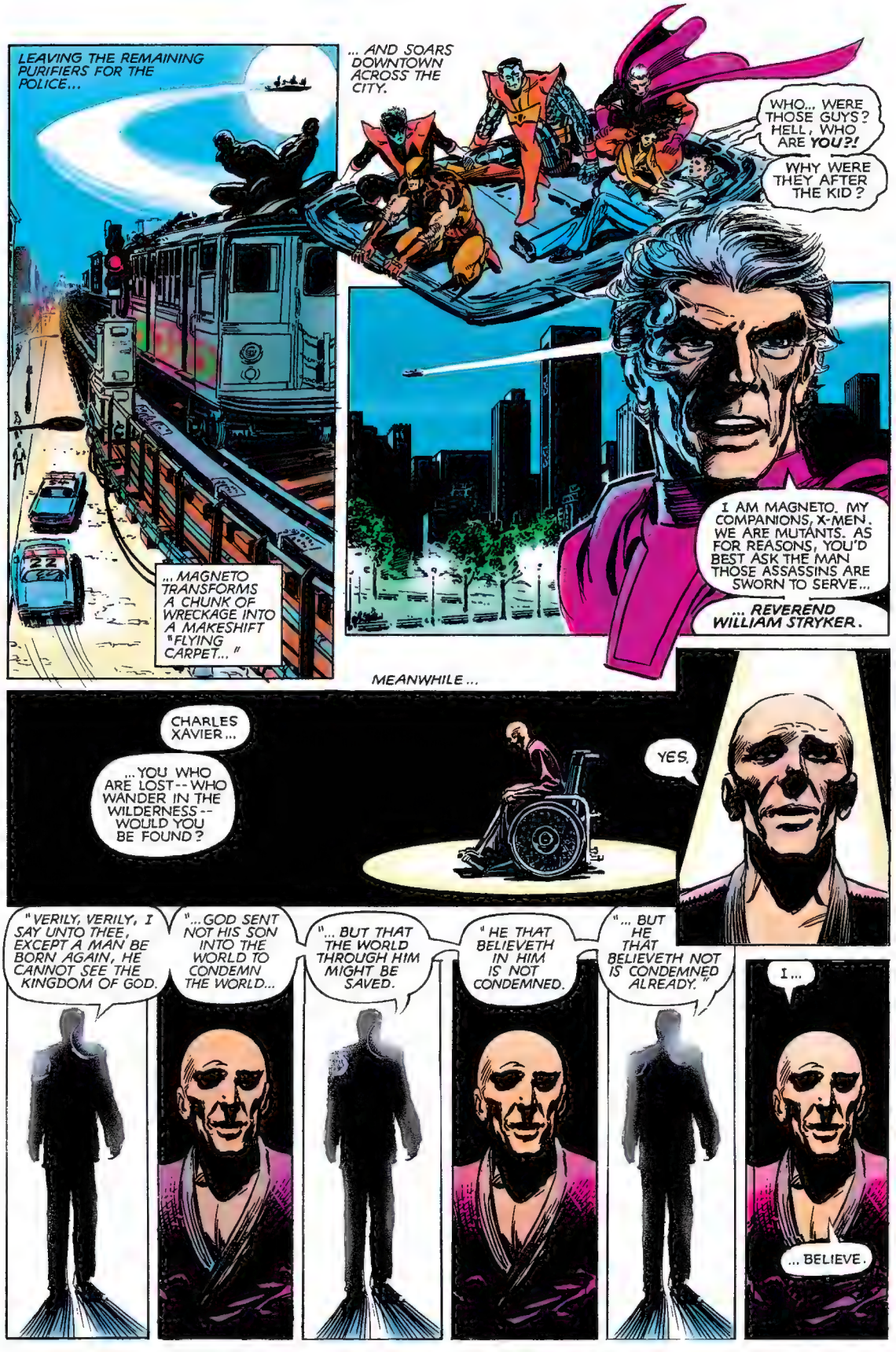
MOVE AWAY FROM THE GIRL.
WE SIX TO YOUR ONE, BITCH.
YOU GONNA SMOKE US ALL?
IF I HAVE TO.
AND UNLESS YOU PUT THAT HAND WHERE I CAN SEE IT...
...I'LL START WITH YOU.
I MANAGED TO CATCH MY BREATH. I'M IN AS GOOD A CONDITION AS I'M GONNA GET. WHILE THE GANG'S DISTRACTING THE PURIFIER...
...I HAVE A CHANCE TO RUN!
DAMN!
YOU WERE WATCHIN' JULIO' AN' LA CHICA, BITCH.
YOU SHOULD'A KEPT YOUR EYE ON ME.
AAHHH!
BLAM!
MARTIN!!
HE'S DEAD, BRO'! SHE ICED OUR JEFÉ!
AN' WE'LL PAY HER IN KIND, MI HERMANOS-- BLOOD FOR BLOOD!
TAKE HER!!
ANNE! WE HEARD GUNFIRE!
BUT I GUESS YOU DIDN'T NEED OUR HELP.
I HAD PRYDE, BUT THESE PUNKS MADE ME LOSE HER. THAT'S A MISTAKE THEY'LL NEVER MAKE AGAIN. KEEP AFTER HER, ROCCO; SHE HAS TO BE CLOSE BY. I'LL HEAD BACK TO THE CAR.

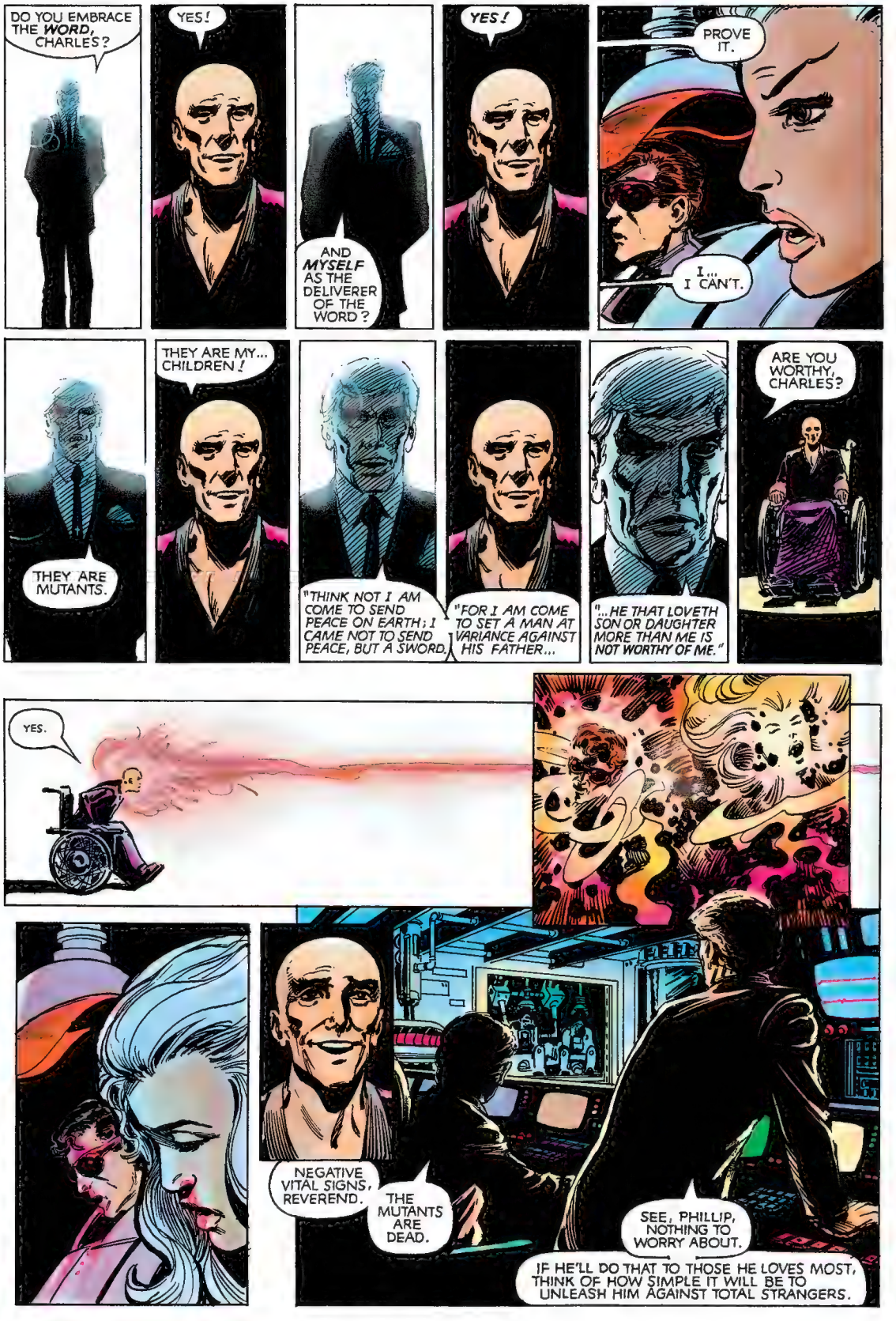
HOWEVER, WHILE THE SKIRMISH RAGED...
RATS!!
AN ALLEY! THANK GOODNESS--AND THE COAST IS CLEAR.
RUSHER STREET. THAT TELLS ME WHERE I AM, FOR ALL THE GOOD THAT DOES. I WISH I HAD A MAP.
A STORE--A BODEGA, A SPANISH DELICATESSEN! MY LUCK'S IMPROVING!
CAREFUL. WOLVERINE SAYS THERE'S NO SUCH ANIMAL.
POOP ON YOU, LOGAN--LUCK EXISTS! AND IT'S FINALLY BREAKING MY WAY!
A PHONE!
SORRY ABOUT THIS, MA BELL--I WOULDN'T DO THIS IF IT WEREN'T AN EMERGENCY. I'LL PAY YOU BACK, TOO, HONEST!
BRRING
C'MON, ANSWER!
BRRING
BRRING
BRRING
BE HOME, SOMEONE, ANYONE!
DON'T DO THIS TO ME!
ANSWER THE DAMN' PHONE!
BRR...KLIK!
XAVIER'S SCHOOL. KURT WAGNER SPEAKING.
FUZZY-ELF, IT'S KITTY! I'M IN A BODEGA, ON RUSHER STREET NEAR COLSON, IN THE BRONX--I'M IN TROUBLE!
BWHOOM!

I PHASED--
--JUST IN TIME!
=KOFF! KOFF! KOFF!=
SMOKE IN MY LUNGS--IT HURTS TO BREATHE--Oh, CRIPES, THEY'VE SPOTTED ME!
ROCCO, OUR BULLETS'RE PASSIN' RIGHT THROUGH HER! WHAT'LL WE DO?!
THE "EL!" THE TOKEN BOOTH CLERK CAN HELP ME!
NO-- I CAN'T INVOLVE HIM. THE PURIFIERS WANT ME SO BADLY, THEY MAY KILL ANYONE WHO GETS IN THEIR WAY.
THERE'S A TRAIN IN THE STATION! IF I CAN REACH IT--!
IT'S ROLLING-- I'VE GOT TO RUN!
USING MY PHASING POWER TO "WALK" ON AIR ISN'T EASY AT THE BEST OF TIMES. THE SLIGHTEST LAPSE IN CONCENTRATION, AN' I'LL BE SPLAT ALL OVER THE SIDEWALK. BUT I CAN'T MAINTAIN THIS PACE MUCH LONGER!
MADE IT!
HOLY--!
SAINTS PRESERVE US!
WHO YELLED?
SHE CAME THROUGH THE WALL LIKE A GHOST!
GIMME A BREAK.
YOU OKAY, HONEY?
LEMME... CATCH... MY BREATH...
MEN... CHASING ME... TRYING TO KILL ME...
DON'T BE SCARED. YOU'RE SAFE HERE--
HEY!
IT'S THEM!
CRASH!
BEHIND ME, KID! I'LL PROTECT YOU!
STAND ASIDE, PEOPLE, YOU WON'T GET HURT.
IT'S THE BRAT WE WANT.

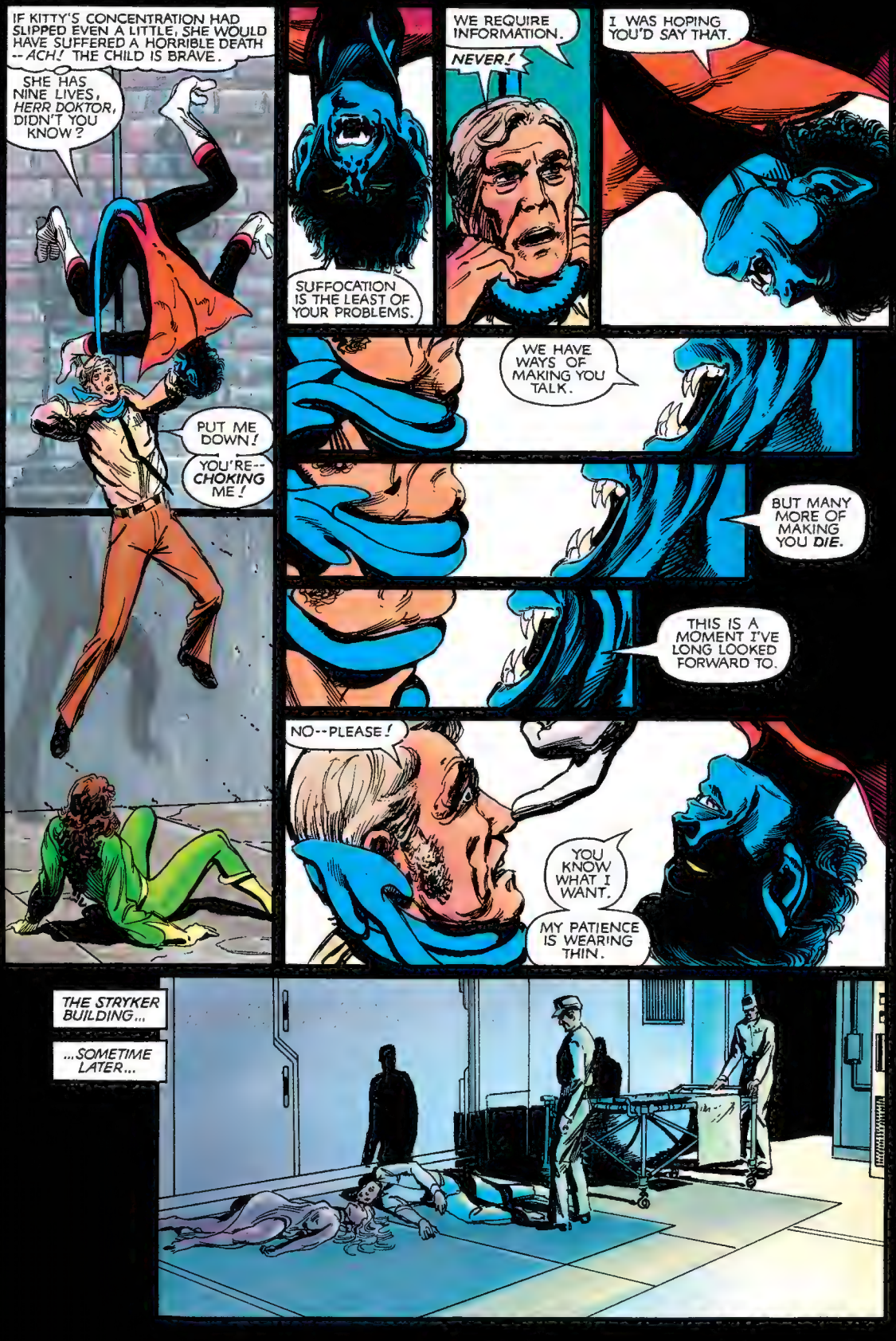

I'M TOO TIRED TO PHASE, AND THAT PURIFIER KNOWS IT. BESIDES, I CAN'T -- I WON'T -- LEAVE THE POLICEMAN.
DO WHAT YOU WANT TO ME, BUT, PLEASE, HELP THE OFFICER! HE ISN'T A MUTANT -- HE'S NOT YOUR ENEMY -- HE'S DYING!
AND HIS DEATH, MUTIE -- AT WHAT'LL APPEAR TO BE YOUR HAND -- WILL SERVE OUR CAUSE AS EFFECTIVELY AS YOUR DEATH.
LAY DOWN YOUR WEAPONS, PURIFIERS, AND SURRENDER --
--OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES.
LOOK! OUT THE WINDOW!
WE'RE FLYING!
IT'S ANOTHER MUTIE! WASTE HIM!
FOOLS, YOU CAN NO MORE HARM THE MASTER OF MAGNETISM THAN YOU -- OR YOUR LEADER -- CAN ESCAPE HIS WRATH!
USING HIS POWERS...
MAGNETO EASILY DEFLECTS BOTH BULLETS AND ENERGY BOLTS
THE PURIFIERS, UNDAUNTED, KEEP FIRING...
...FOR AS LONG AS THEY HAVE WEAPONS LEFT TO FIRE.

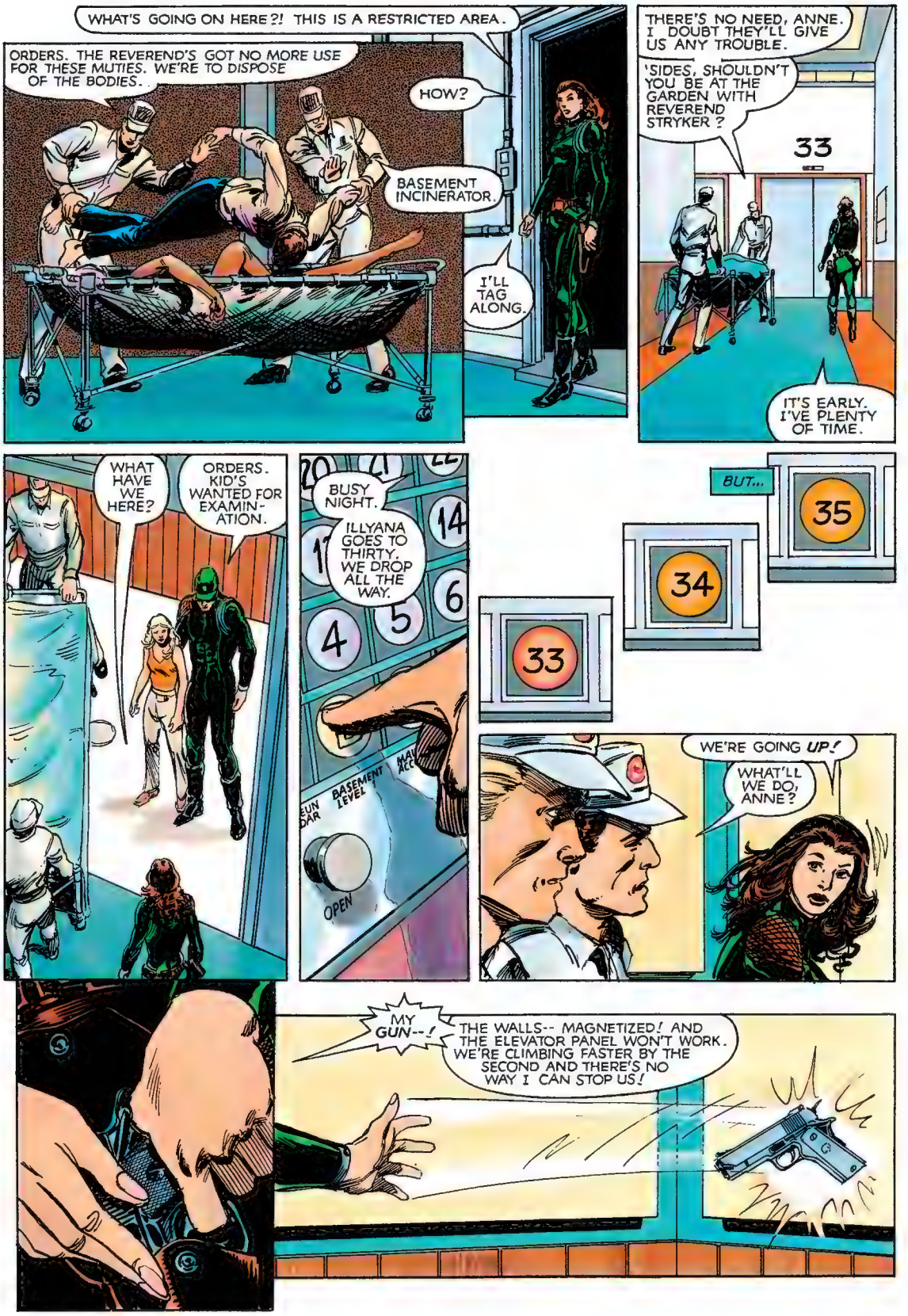
OUR APOLOGIES, KATZCHEN, FOR NOT ARRIVING SOONER.
GLAD T' SEE YOU LEFT SOME O' THE OPPOSITION...
...FER US!
YOU PURIFIERS SEEM MOST FORMIDABLE...
...AGAINST THOSE WHO CANNOT FIGHT BACK!
SAY GOODBYE, ASSASSIN.
BAM!
MAGNETO--SIDING WITH THE X-MEN?!
COLOSSUS--GUYS--THE OFFICER'S BEEN SHOT! FORGET THE PURIFIERS--WE HAVE TO HELP HIM!
CALM YOURSELF, CHILD.
THE BULLET IS STEEL-JACKETED.
MY POWERS CAN EASILY DRAW IT FROM HIS BODY.
HIS CONDITION IS STILL CRITICAL. IF HE IS TO SURVIVE, WE MUST GET HIM TO A HOSPITAL.
ELF! WHERE'D YOU 'PORT TO, PARTNER?!
RIKER'S ISLAND PRISON.

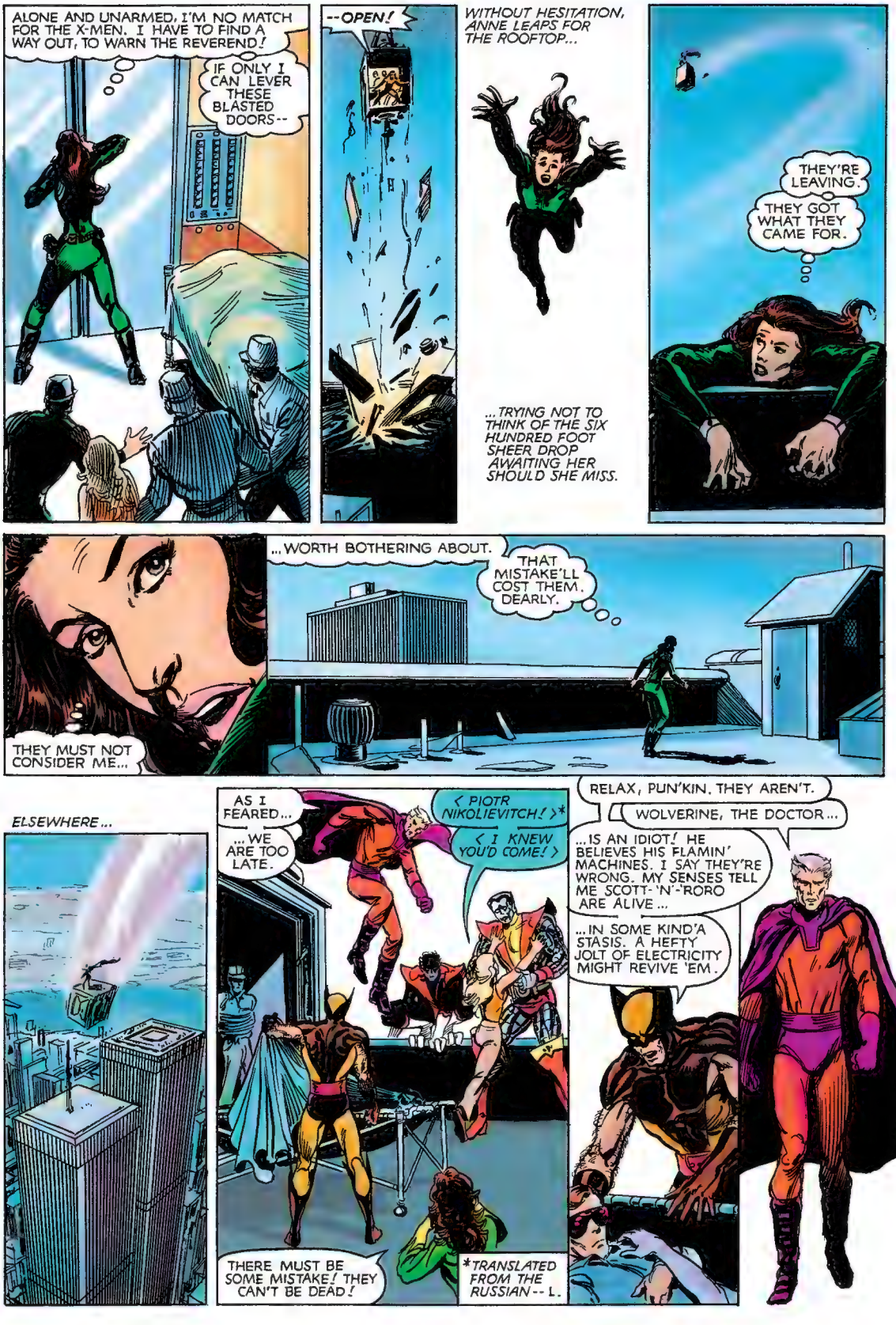

LEAVING THE REMAINING PURIFIERS FOR THE POLICE...
...MAGNETO TRANSFORMS A CHUNK OF WRECKAGE INTO A MAKESHIFT "FLYING CARPET..."
...AND SOARS DOWNTOWN ACROSS THE CITY.
WHO... WERE THOSE GUYS? HELL, WHO ARE YOU?!
WHY WERE THEY AFTER THE KID?
I AM MAGNETO. MY COMPANIONS, X-MEN. WE ARE MUTANTS. AS FOR REASONS, YOU'D BEST ASK THE MAN THOSE ASSASSINS ARE SWORN TO SERVE...
...REVEREND WILLIAM STRYKER.
MEANWHILE...
CHARLES XAVIER...
...YOU WHO ARE LOST--WHO WANDER IN THE WILDERNESS--WOULD YOU BE FOUND?
YES.
"VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO THEE, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD.
"...GOD SENT NOT HIS SON INTO THE WORLD TO CONDEMN THE WORLD...
"...BUT THAT THE WORLD THROUGH HIM MIGHT BE SAVED.
"HE THAT BELIEVETH IN HIM IS NOT CONDEMNED.
"...BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT IS CONDEMNED ALREADY."
I...
...BELIEVE.


DO YOU EMBRACE THE *WORD*, CHARLES?
YES!
AND *MYSELF* AS THE DELIVERER OF THE WORD?
YES!
PROVE IT.
I... I CAN'T.
THEY ARE MUTANTS.
THEY ARE MY... CHILDREN!
"THINK NOT I AM COME TO SEND PEACE ON EARTH; I CAME NOT TO SEND PEACE, BUT A SWORD.
"FOR I AM COME TO SET A MAN AT VARIANCE AGAINST HIS FATHER...
"...HE THAT LOVETH SON OR DAUGHTER MORE THAN ME IS NOT WORTHY OF ME."
ARE YOU WORTHY, CHARLES?
YES.
NEGATIVE VITAL SIGNS, REVEREND.
THE MUTANTS ARE DEAD.
SEE, PHILLIP, NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
IF HE'LL DO THAT TO THOSE HE LOVES MOST, THINK OF HOW SIMPLE IT WILL BE TO UNLEASH HIM AGAINST TOTAL STRANGERS.

WHERE TO, Dr. RAMSEY?
HOME, GEORGE, FOR A SHOWER, SHAVE, CHANGE OF CLOTHES, AND A DECENT MEAL.
AN HOUR SHOULD DO THE TRICK. THEN, I'LL NEED YOU TO DRIVE ME TO THE GARDEN FOR TONIGHT'S RALLY.
NO PROBLEM. IT SOUNDS LIKE A PRETTY BIG SHINDIG -- IS IT TRUE THE PRESIDENT'S GOING TO BE THERE?
WOULD YOU LIKE HIS AUTOGRAPH?
THAT'D BE GREAT, DOC. THANKS.
BUT, AS THE LIMOUSINE ACCELERATES DOWN THE STREET...
SURPRISE, SUCKER!
!?!
Uh-UH, HEAD-SHRINKER. NOT A PEEP.
MMMPHGH!
WE'RE LEAVING AS SILENTLY AS WE ARRIVED.
I'M DOING IT!
... BY MAINTAINING PHYSICAL CONTACT...
... I ACTUALLY PHASED ANOTHER BODY WITH ME!
I'VE PRACTICED PHASING LARGISH MASSES IN THE DANGER ROOM, BUT I NEVER PHASED A PERSON BEFORE, I NEVER HAD TO...
... AND I'VE NEVER FELT SO BEAT --
--HEY!
GET AWAY FROM ME!
WAIT -- YOU'RE THE PRYDE GIRL. BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD --
URRRGH!

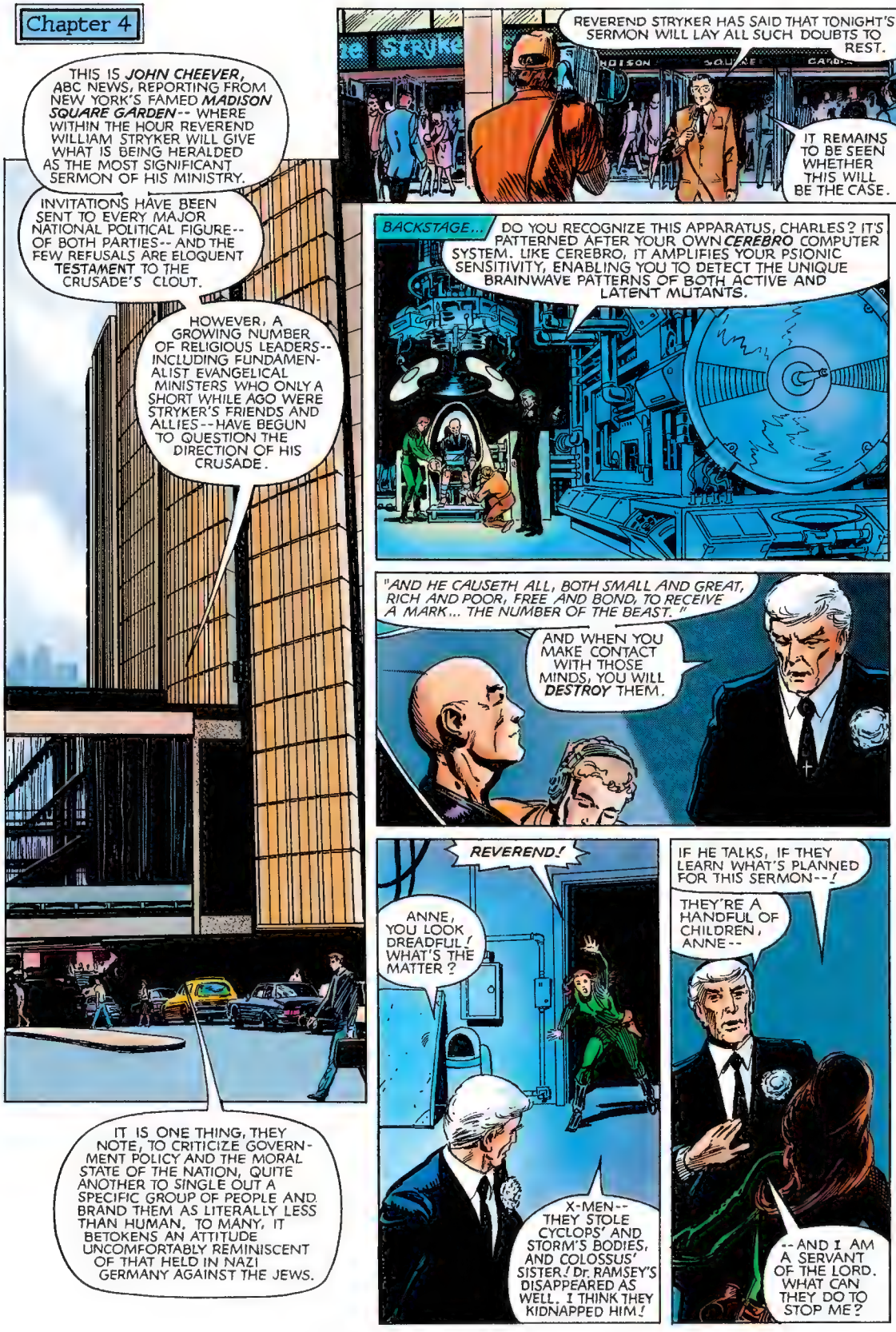

IF KITTY'S CONCENTRATION HAD SLIPPED EVEN A LITTLE, SHE WOULD HAVE SUFFERED A HORRIBLE DEATH --ACH! THE CHILD IS BRAVE.
SHE HAS NINE LIVES, HERR DOKTOR, DIDN'T YOU KNOW?
PUT ME DOWN!
YOU'RE-- CHOKING ME!
SUFFOCATION IS THE LEAST OF YOUR PROBLEMS.
WE REQUIRE INFORMATION.
NEVER!
I WAS HOPING YOU'D SAY THAT.
WE HAVE WAYS OF MAKING YOU TALK.
BUT MANY MORE OF MAKING YOU DIE.
THIS IS A MOMENT I'VE LONG LOOKED FORWARD TO.
NO--PLEASE!
YOU KNOW WHAT I WANT.
MY PATIENCE IS WEARING THIN.
THE STRYKER BUILDING...
...SOMETIME LATER...

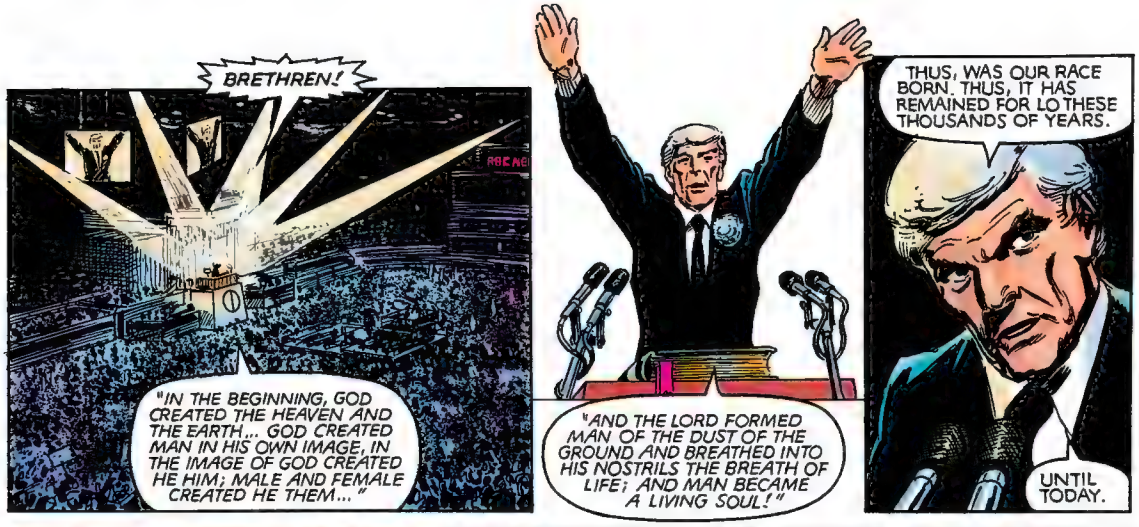

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?! THIS IS A RESTRICTED AREA.
ORDERS. THE REVEREND'S GOT NO MORE USE FOR THESE MUTIES. WE'RE TO DISPOSE OF THE BODIES.
HOW?
BASEMENT INCINERATOR.
I'LL TAG ALONG.
THERE'S NO NEED, ANNE. I DOUBT THEY'LL GIVE US ANY TROUBLE.
'SIDES, SHOULDN'T YOU BE AT THE GARDEN WITH REVEREND STRYKER?
33
IT'S EARLY. I'VE PLENTY OF TIME.
WHAT HAVE WE HERE?
ORDERS. KID'S WANTED FOR EXAMIN-ATION.
BUSY NIGHT.
ILLYANA GOES TO THIRTY. WE DROP ALL THE WAY.
BASEMENT LEVEL
OPEN
BUT...
35
34
33
WE'RE GOING UP!
WHAT'LL WE DO, ANNE?
MY GUN--!
THE WALLS-- MAGNETIZED! AND THE ELEVATOR PANEL WON'T WORK. WE'RE CLIMBING FASTER BY THE SECOND AND THERE'S NO WAY I CAN STOP US!


ALONE AND UNARMED, I'M NO MATCH FOR THE X-MEN. I HAVE TO FIND A WAY OUT, TO WARN THE REVEREND!
IF ONLY I CAN LEVER THESE BLASTED DOORS--
--OPEN!
WITHOUT HESITATION, ANNE LEAPS FOR THE ROOFTOP...
...TRYING NOT TO THINK OF THE SIX HUNDRED FOOT SHEER DROP AWAITING HER SHOULD SHE MISS.
THEY'RE LEAVING.
THEY GOT WHAT THEY CAME FOR.
THEY MUST NOT CONSIDER ME...
...WORTH BOTHERING ABOUT.
THAT MISTAKE'LL COST THEM. DEARLY.
ELSEWHERE...
AS I FEARED...
...WE ARE TOO LATE.
< PIOTR NIKOLIEVITCH! >*
< I KNEW YOU'D COME! >
THERE MUST BE SOME MISTAKE! THEY CAN'T BE DEAD!
*TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN -- L.
RELAX, PUN'KIN. THEY AREN'T.
WOLVERINE, THE DOCTOR...
...IS AN IDIOT! HE BELIEVES HIS FLAMIN' MACHINES. I SAY THEY'RE WRONG. MY SENSES TELL ME SCOTT-'N'-'RORO ARE ALIVE...
...IN SOME KIND'A STASIS. A HEFTY JOLT OF ELECTRICITY MIGHT REVIVE 'EM.

IT'S WORTH A TRY.
WE CERTAINLY HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE.
UHHNNN...
FASCINATING. CHARLES MUST HAVE BEEN RESISTING STRYKER'S PROGRAMMING ON SOME DEEP SUBCONSCIOUS LEVEL. HE COULD NOT KILL THESE TWO-- NO MATTER HOW MUCH HE BELIEVED HE SHOULD.
INSTEAD, HE REDUCED THEIR METABOLIC LEVELS TO THE BAREST MINIMUM, CREATING THE ILLUSION OF DEATH.
MAGNETO--?!?
HE SAVED YOUR LIVES, SCOTT
WHAT?! WHY?!!
CONSIDERING OUR PAST ASSOCIATION, YOUR REACTION IS UNDERSTANDABLE.
I AM NOT YOUR ENEMY, X-MEN, NOR DO I CONSIDER YOU MINE. TRUE, MY GOAL HAS EVER BEEN THE CONQUEST OF EARTH-- BUT SOLELY TO CREATE A WORLD WHERE OUR RACE, HOMO SUPERIOR, CAN LIVE IN PEACE.
IS YOUR WAY ANY BETTER? A MUTANT DICTATORSHIP?
DO NOT TAKE THAT TONE WITH ME, BOY. I HAVE LIVED UNDER A DICTATORSHIP...
...AND SEEN MY FAMILY BUTCHERED BY ITS SERVANTS. WHEN I RULE, IT WILL BE FOR THE BETTERMENT OF ALL.
LOOK AT YOURSELVES, RISKING YOUR LIVES FOR A HUMANITY THAT WOULD RATHER SEE YOU BEHIND BARS, OR DEAD. WHY DO YOU PERSIST?
CONTENTMENT BREEDS TRANQUILITY-- DISCONTENT, REBELLION. THEREFORE, I SHALL ENSURE THE ONE BY ELIMINATING THE ROOT CAUSES OF THE OTHER: HUNGER, POVERTY, DISEASE, WAR.
THE FREEDOMS LOST WILL NOT BE NOTICED, EVEN IN THE MOST LIBERTARIAN OF STATES. AND THE MATERIAL BENEFITS SHOULD MORE THAN BALANCE THE SCALES.
ANYONE CAN CREATE AN UTOPIA FOR A SINGLE GENERATION, MAGNETO; THE TRICK IS MAKING IT LAST. WHO PRESERVES YOUR DREAM AFTER YOU'RE GONE?
YOU, OF COURSE, CYCLOPS. AND THE X-MEN. WHY DO YOU THINK I WANT YOU BY MY SIDE?
BUT ALL THIS MAY WELL BE RENDERED ACADEMIC IF REVEREND STRYKER'S PLANS ARE LEFT UNCHECKED. CONSIDER MY OFFER, X-MEN. SHOULD THE FATES BE KIND, WE SHALL SPEAK OF IT AGAIN.

Chapter 4


THIS IS JOHN CHEEVER, ABC NEWS, REPORTING FROM NEW YORK'S FAMED MADISON SQUARE GARDEN-- WHERE WITHIN THE HOUR REVEREND WILLIAM STRYKER WILL GIVE WHAT IS BEING HERALDED AS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT SERMON OF HIS MINISTRY.
INVITATIONS HAVE BEEN SENT TO EVERY MAJOR NATIONAL POLITICAL FIGURE-- OF BOTH PARTIES-- AND THE FEW REFUSALS ARE ELOQUENT TESTAMENT TO THE CRUSADE'S CLOUT.
HOWEVER, A GROWING NUMBER OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS-- INCLUDING FUNDAMENTALIST EVANGELICAL MINISTERS WHO ONLY A SHORT WHILE AGO WERE STRYKER'S FRIENDS AND ALLIES--HAVE BEGUN TO QUESTION THE DIRECTION OF HIS CRUSADE.
IT IS ONE THING, THEY NOTE, TO CRITICIZE GOVERNMENT POLICY AND THE MORAL STATE OF THE NATION, QUITE ANOTHER TO SINGLE OUT A SPECIFIC GROUP OF PEOPLE AND BRAND THEM AS LITERALLY LESS THAN HUMAN. TO MANY, IT BETOKENS AN ATTITUDE UNCOMFORTABLY REMINISCENT OF THAT HELD IN NAZI GERMANY AGAINST THE JEWS.
REVEREND STRYKER HAS SAID THAT TONIGHT'S SERMON WILL LAY ALL SUCH DOUBTS TO REST.
IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THIS WILL BE THE CASE.
BACKSTAGE... DO YOU RECOGNIZE THIS APPARATUS, CHARLES? IT'S PATTERNED AFTER YOUR OWN CEREBRO COMPUTER SYSTEM. LIKE CEREBRO, IT AMPLIFIES YOUR PSIONIC SENSITIVITY, ENABLING YOU TO DETECT THE UNIQUE BRAINWAVE PATTERNS OF BOTH ACTIVE AND LATENT MUTANTS.
"AND HE CAUSETH ALL, BOTH SMALL AND GREAT, RICH AND POOR, FREE AND BOND, TO RECEIVE A MARK... THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST."
AND WHEN YOU MAKE CONTACT WITH THOSE MINDS, YOU WILL DESTROY THEM.
REVEREND!
ANNE, YOU LOOK DREADFUL! WHAT'S THE MATTER?
X-MEN-- THEY STOLE CYCLOPS' AND STORM'S BODIES, AND COLOSSUS' SISTER! Dr. RAMSEY'S DISAPPEARED AS WELL. I THINK THEY KIDNAPPED HIM!
IF HE TALKS, IF THEY LEARN WHAT'S PLANNED FOR THIS SERMON--!
THEY'RE A HANDFUL OF CHILDREN, ANNE--
--AND I AM A SERVANT OF THE LORD. WHAT CAN THEY DO TO STOP ME?

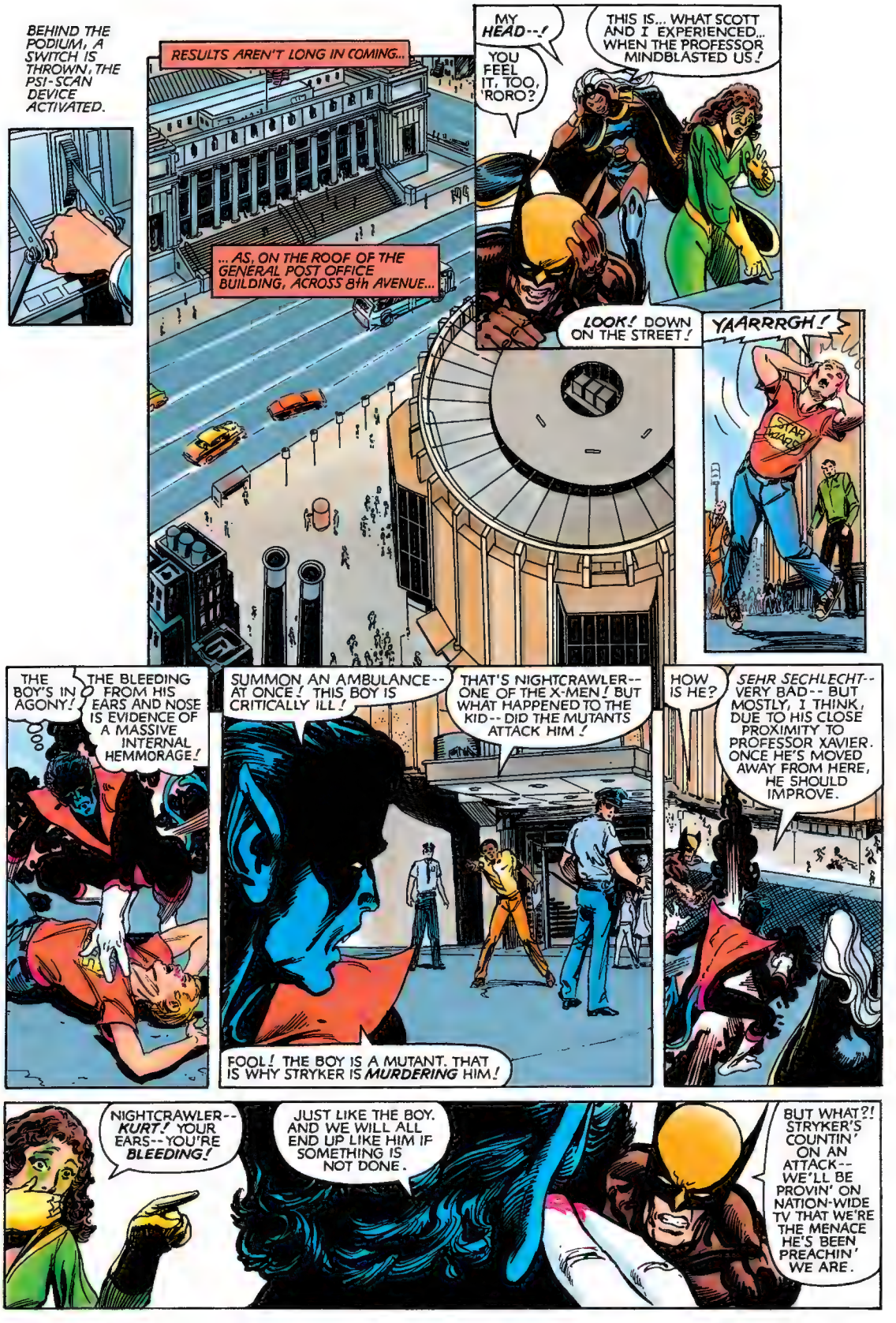

BRETHREN!
"IN THE BEGINNING, GOD CREATED THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH... GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD CREATED HE HIM; MALE AND FEMALE CREATED HE THEM..."
"AND THE LORD FORMED MAN OF THE DUST OF THE GROUND AND BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS THE BREATH OF LIFE; AND MAN BECAME A LIVING SOUL!"
THUS, WAS OUR RACE BORN. THUS, IT HAS REMAINED FOR LO THESE THOUSANDS OF YEARS.
UNTIL TODAY.

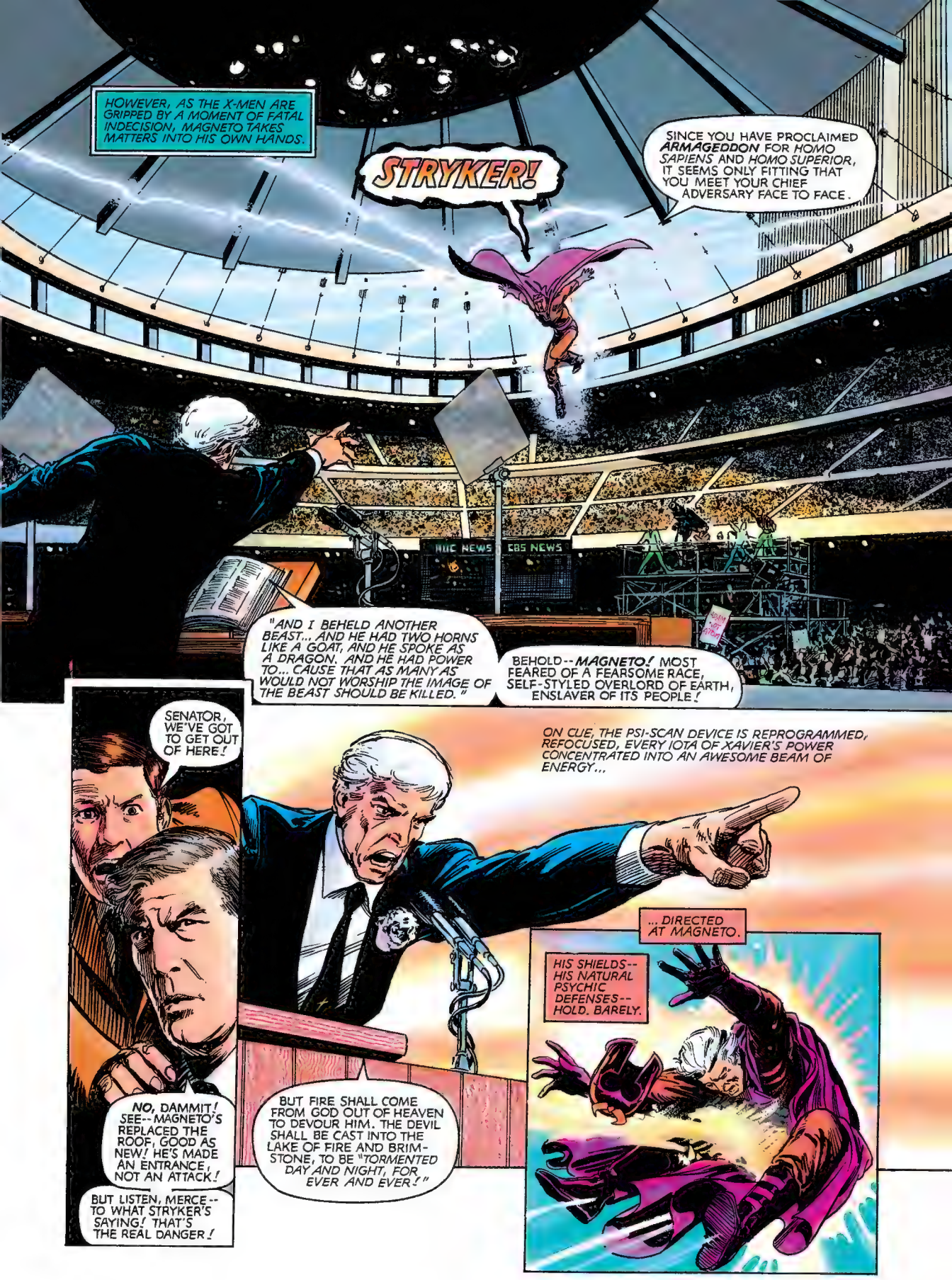
MERCE!
YES, SENATOR?
DOES THE PRESIDENT HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT STRYKER'S SAYING?! DOES HE SUPPORT IT?!
THE PRESIDENT IS A FAIR-MINDED MAN. HE BELIEVES THE REVEREND'S VIEWS DESERVE A HEARING.

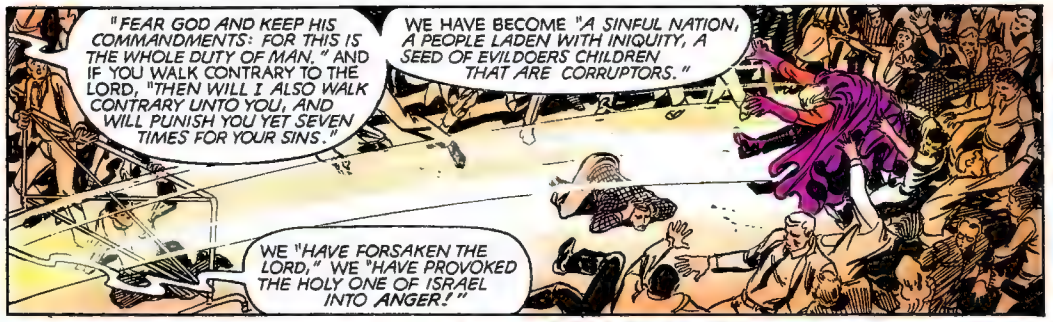
WE ARE BEINGS OF DIVINE CREATION, YET THERE ARE THOSE AMONG US WHOSE EXISTENCE IS AN AFFRONT TO THAT DIVINITY.
GOD CREATED MAN-- THE HUMAN RACE! THE BIBLE MAKES NO MENTION OF MUTANTS. SO WHERE DO THEY COME FROM? SOME-- SO-CALLED SCIENTISTS, HUMANISTS-- SAY THEY ARE PART OF THE NATURAL PROCESS OF EVOLUTION.

WHADDYA THINK, JEFF?
THE RANGERS'RE PLAYIN' THE ISLANDERS OVER IN GARDEN CITY. I WISH I WAS THERE.
CROWD'S EATIN' IT UP. I DUNNO, PARTNER, THAT PREACHER SCARES ME.

ARE WE NOW TO LET THOSE WHO PUT FORWARD THE PROPOSITION THAT WE ARE DESCENDED FROM APES TELL US THAT OUR DESCENDENTS-- OUR CHILDREN-- WILL BE BORN MONSTERS?! AND THAT THIS IS NATURAL ?!?
I SAY, NO! I SAY, NEVER!
WE ARE AS GOD MADE US! ANY DEVIATION FROM THAT SACRED TEMPLATE-- ANY MUTATION-- COMES NOT FROM HEAVEN, BUT HELL!


BEHIND THE PODIUM, A SWITCH IS THROWN, THE PSI-SCAN DEVICE ACTIVATED.
RESULTS AREN'T LONG IN COMING...
... AS, ON THE ROOF OF THE GENERAL POST OFFICE BUILDING, ACROSS 8th AVENUE...
MY HEAD--!
YOU FEEL IT, TOO, 'RORO?
THIS IS... WHAT SCOTT AND I EXPERIENCED... WHEN THE PROFESSOR MINDBLASTED US!
LOOK! DOWN ON THE STREET!
YAARRRGH!
STAR WARS
THE BOY'S IN AGONY!
THE BLEEDING FROM HIS EARS AND NOSE IS EVIDENCE OF A MASSIVE INTERNAL HEMMORAGE!
SUMMON AN AMBULANCE-- AT ONCE! THIS BOY IS CRITICALLY ILL!
THAT'S NIGHTCRAWLER-- ONE OF THE X-MEN! BUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THE KID-- DID THE MUTANTS ATTACK HIM!
FOOL! THE BOY IS A MUTANT. THAT IS WHY STRYKER IS MURDERING HIM!
HOW IS HE?
SEHR SECHLECHT-- VERY BAD-- BUT MOSTLY, I THINK, DUE TO HIS CLOSE PROXIMITY TO PROFESSOR XAVIER. ONCE HE'S MOVED AWAY FROM HERE, HE SHOULD IMPROVE.
NIGHTCRAWLER-- KURT! YOUR EARS-- YOU'RE BLEEDING!
JUST LIKE THE BOY. AND WE WILL ALL END UP LIKE HIM IF SOMETHING IS NOT DONE.
BUT WHAT?! STRYKER'S COUNTIN' ON AN ATTACK-- WE'LL BE PROVIN' ON NATION-WIDE TV THAT WE'RE THE MENACE HE'S BEEN PREACHIN' WE ARE.


HOWEVER, AS THE X-MEN ARE GRIPPED BY A MOMENT OF FATAL INDECISION, MAGNETO TAKES MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS.
STRYKER!
SINCE YOU HAVE PROCLAIMED ARMAGEDDON FOR HOMO SAPIENS AND HOMO SUPERIOR, IT SEEMS ONLY FITTING THAT YOU MEET YOUR CHIEF ADVERSARY FACE TO FACE.
NBC NEWS
CBS NEWS
"AND I BEHELD ANOTHER BEAST... AND HE HAD TWO HORNS LIKE A GOAT, AND HE SPOKE AS A DRAGON. AND HE HAD POWER TO... CAUSE THAT AS MANY AS WOULD NOT WORSHIP THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST SHOULD BE KILLED."
BEHOLD--MAGNETO! MOST FEARED OF A FEARSOME RACE, SELF-STYLED OVERLORD OF EARTH, ENSLAVER OF ITS PEOPLE!
SENATOR, WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!
NO, DAMMIT! SEE--MAGNETO'S REPLACED THE ROOF, GOOD AS NEW! HE'S MADE AN ENTRANCE, NOT AN ATTACK!
BUT LISTEN, MERCE--TO WHAT STRYKER'S SAYING! THAT'S THE REAL DANGER!
BUT FIRE SHALL COME FROM GOD OUT OF HEAVEN TO DEVOUR HIM. THE DEVIL SHALL BE CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE, TO BE "TORMENTED DAY AND NIGHT, FOR EVER AND EVER!"
ON CUE, THE PSI-SCAN DEVICE IS REPROGRAMMED, REFOCUSED, EVERY IOTA OF XAVIER'S POWER CONCENTRATED INTO AN AWESOME BEAM OF ENERGY...
... DIRECTED AT MAGNETO.
HIS SHIELDS--HIS NATURAL PSYCHIC DEFENSES--HOLD. BARELY.


"FEAR GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: FOR THIS IS THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN." AND IF YOU WALK CONTRARY TO THE LORD, "THEN WILL I ALSO WALK CONTRARY UNTO YOU, AND WILL PUNISH YOU YET SEVEN TIMES FOR YOUR SINS."
WE HAVE BECOME "A SINFUL NATION, A PEOPLE LADEN WITH INIQUITY, A SEED OF EVILDOERS CHILDREN THAT ARE CORRUPTORS."
WE "HAVE FORSAKEN THE LORD," WE "HAVE PROVOKED THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL INTO ANGER!"

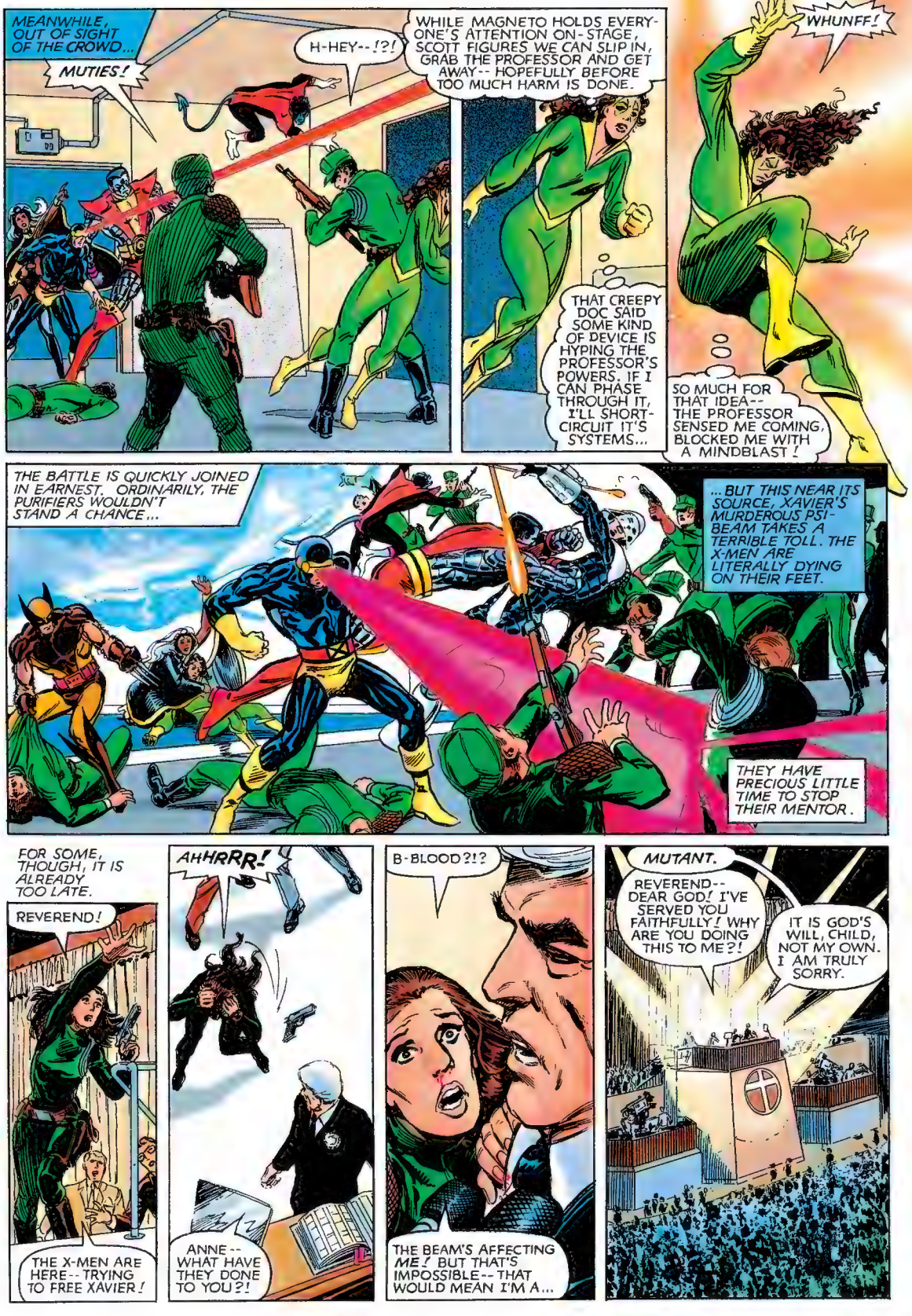
WE HAVE SINNED. AND MUST ATONE FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS...
...WITH BLOOD!
I UNDERESTIMATED CHARLES. IN THE PAST, HE ALWAYS HELD BACK--FOR FEAR HE MIGHT HARM HIS FOE. NOT SO, TONIGHT. I CANNOT SURVIVE ANOTHER SUCH PSIBOLT.
I HAVE NEVER FELT SO DRAINED OF STRENGTH. I FEAR I AM TOO WEAK TO EVEN STAND.

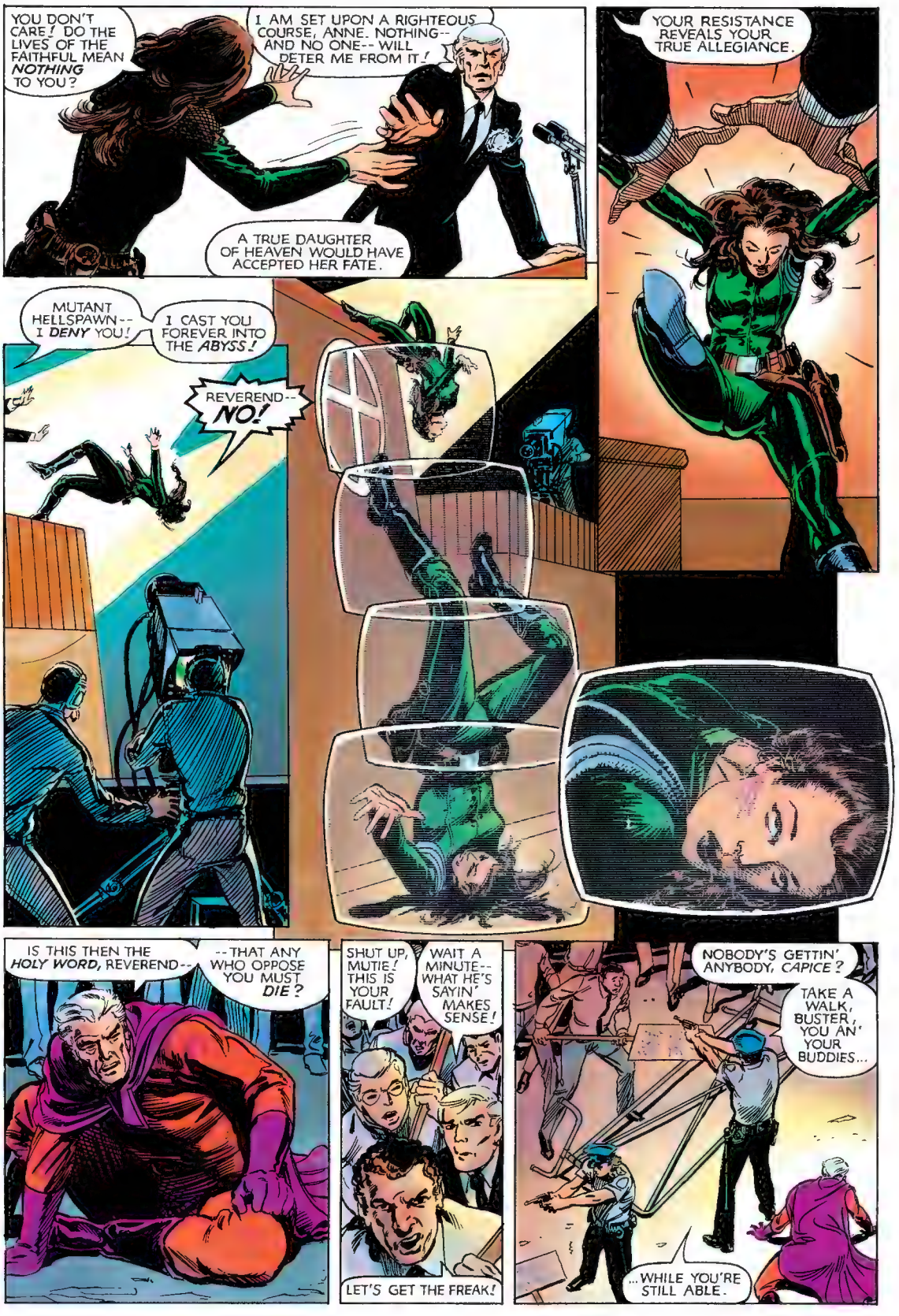
BUT ENOUGH OF MY POWER REMAINS TO FORCE THIS RABBLE BACK. A LAST, DEFIANT GESTURE--FOR THAT IS ALL IT IS--
--I CANNOT HOLD THEM LONG.

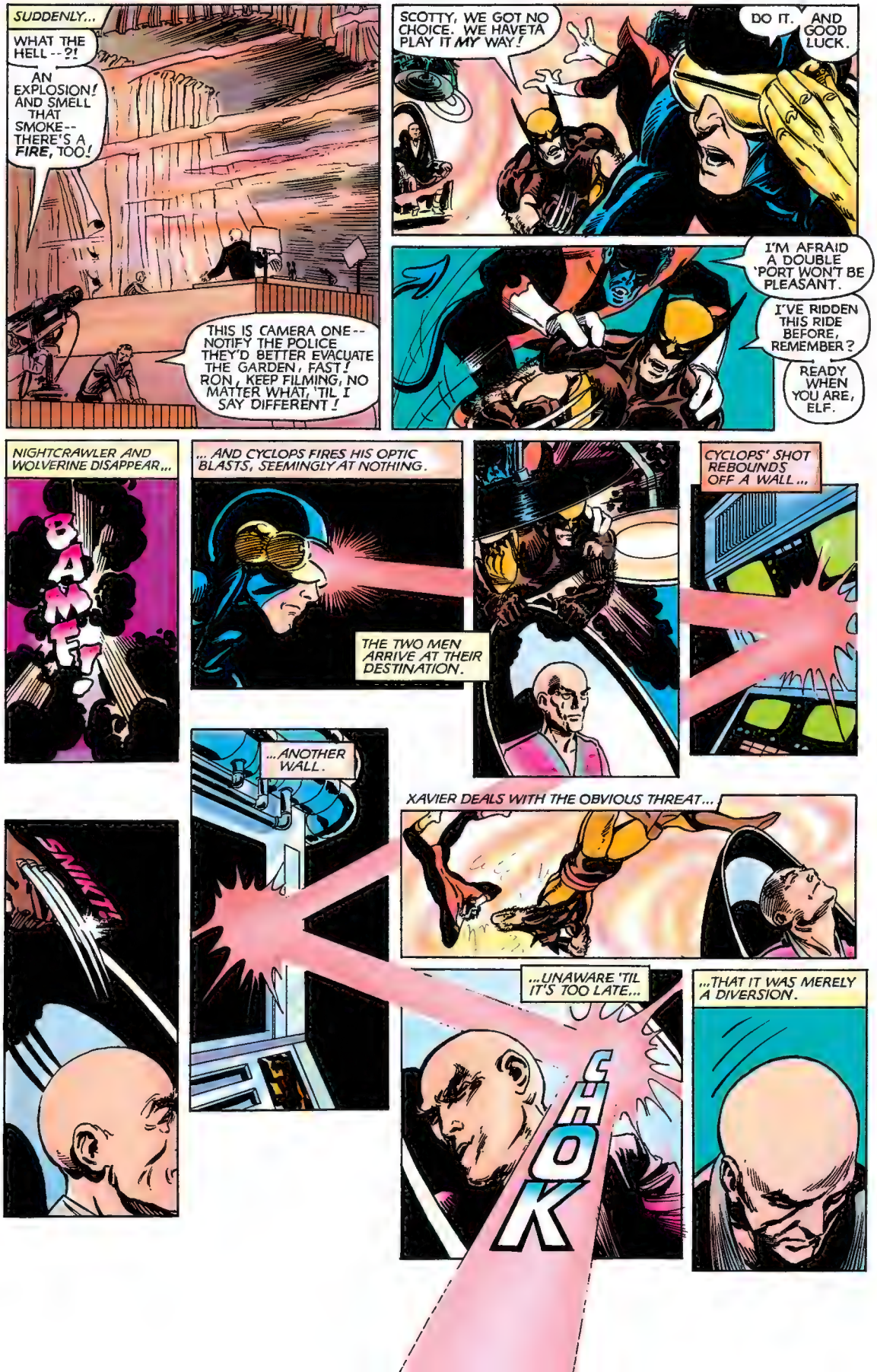
THEY'RE GOING TO KILL HIM--THIS IS INSANE!
STRYKER'S GONE TOO FAR! BAD ENOUGH HE CLAIMS MUTANTS--AS A RACE--ARE EVIL, BUT TO CALL FOR THEIR SUMMARY EXECUTION?!
SENATOR--

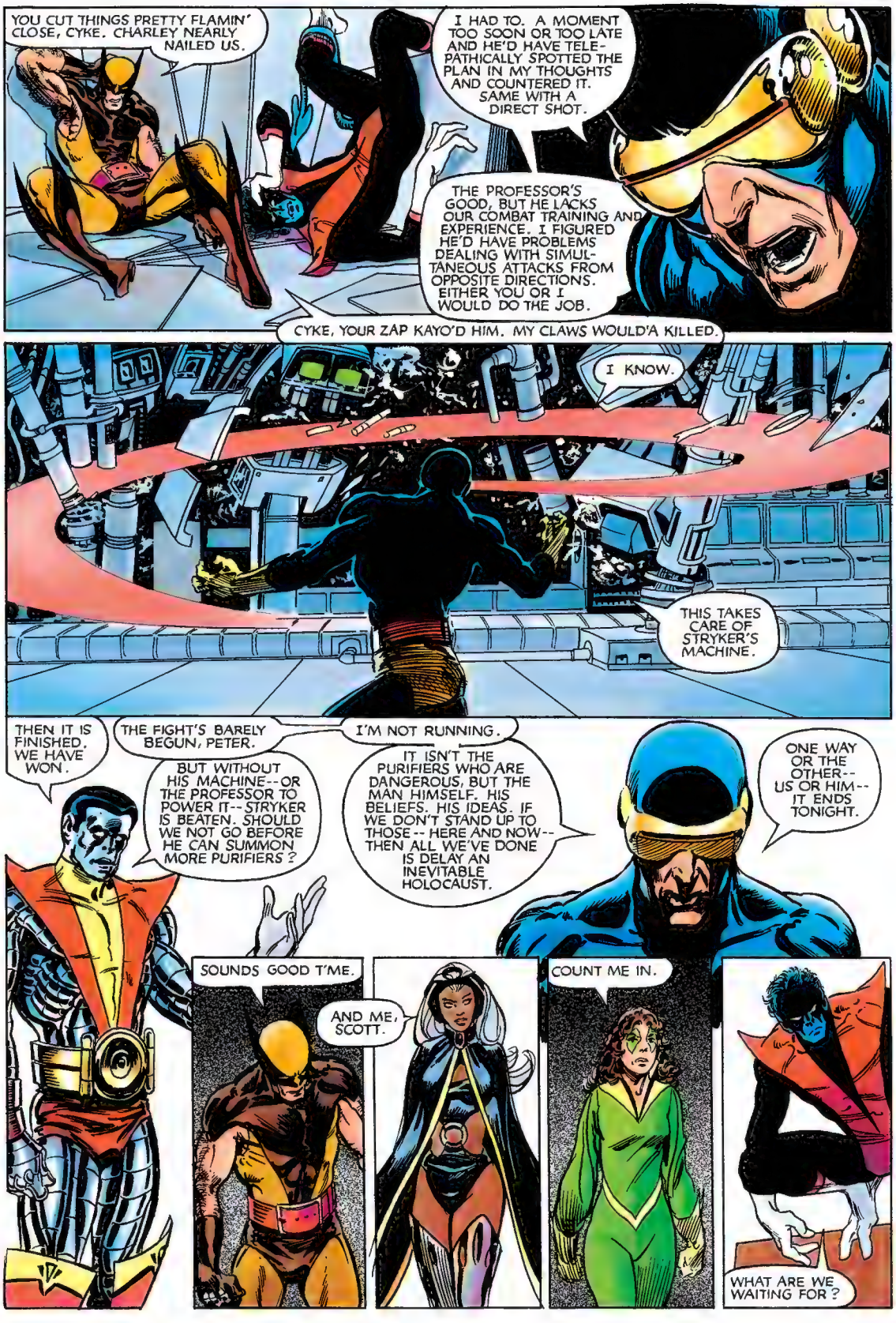
YOU'RE BLEEDING!
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE?!
WHAT IS THAT MADMAN DOING?!
"THE SOUL THAT SINNETH, IT SHALL DIE."

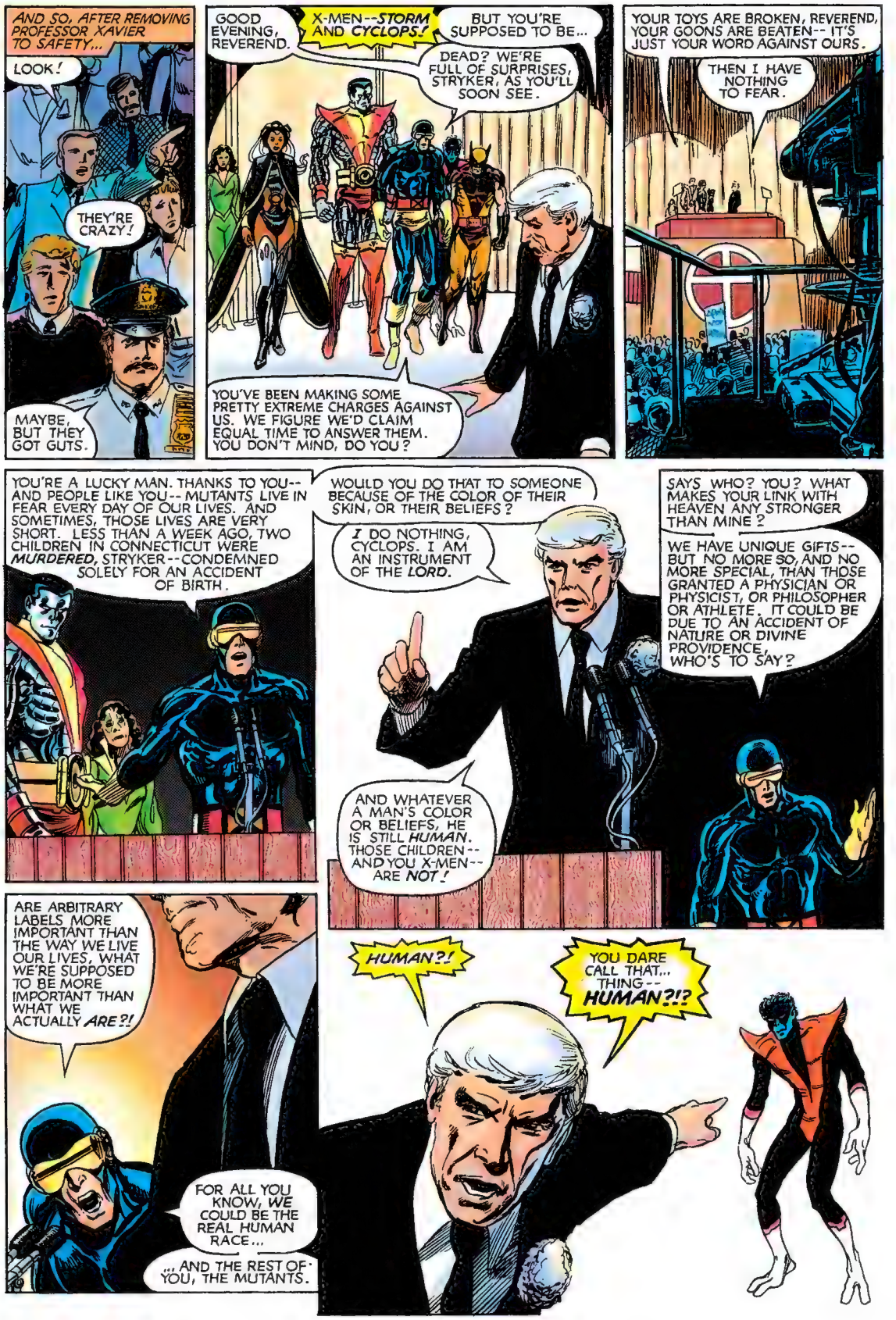
NOT IF I CAN HELP IT, BUSTER!
BACK OFF YOU PEOPLE!
THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE A CHURCH SERVICE, NOT A DAMN CIRCUS! LEAVE THE MAN BE!


MEANWHILE, OUT OF SIGHT OF THE CROWD...
MUTIES!
H-HEY--!?!
WHILE MAGNETO HOLDS EVERY-ONE'S ATTENTION ON-STAGE, SCOTT FIGURES WE CAN SLIP IN, GRAB THE PROFESSOR AND GET AWAY-- HOPEFULLY BEFORE TOO MUCH HARM IS DONE.
THAT CREEPY DOC SAID SOME KIND OF DEVICE IS HYPING THE PROFESSOR'S POWERS. IF I CAN PHASE THROUGH IT, I'LL SHORT-CIRCUIT IT'S SYSTEMS...
WHUNFF!
SO MUCH FOR THAT IDEA-- THE PROFESSOR SENSED ME COMING, BLOCKED ME WITH A MINDBLAST!
THE BATTLE IS QUICKLY JOINED IN EARNEST. ORDINARILY, THE PURIFIERS WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE...
...BUT THIS NEAR ITS SOURCE, XAVIER'S MURDEROUS PSI-BEAM TAKES A TERRIBLE TOLL. THE X-MEN ARE LITERALLY DYING ON THEIR FEET.
THEY HAVE PRECIOUS LITTLE TIME TO STOP THEIR MENTOR.
FOR SOME, THOUGH, IT IS ALREADY TOO LATE.
REVEREND!
THE X-MEN ARE HERE-- TRYING TO FREE XAVIER!
AHHRRR!
ANNE-- WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO YOU?!
B-BLOOD?!?
THE BEAM'S AFFECTING ME! BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE-- THAT WOULD MEAN I'M A...
MUTANT.
REVEREND-- DEAR GOD! I'VE SERVED YOU FAITHFULLY! WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME?!
IT IS GOD'S WILL, CHILD, NOT MY OWN. I AM TRULY SORRY.

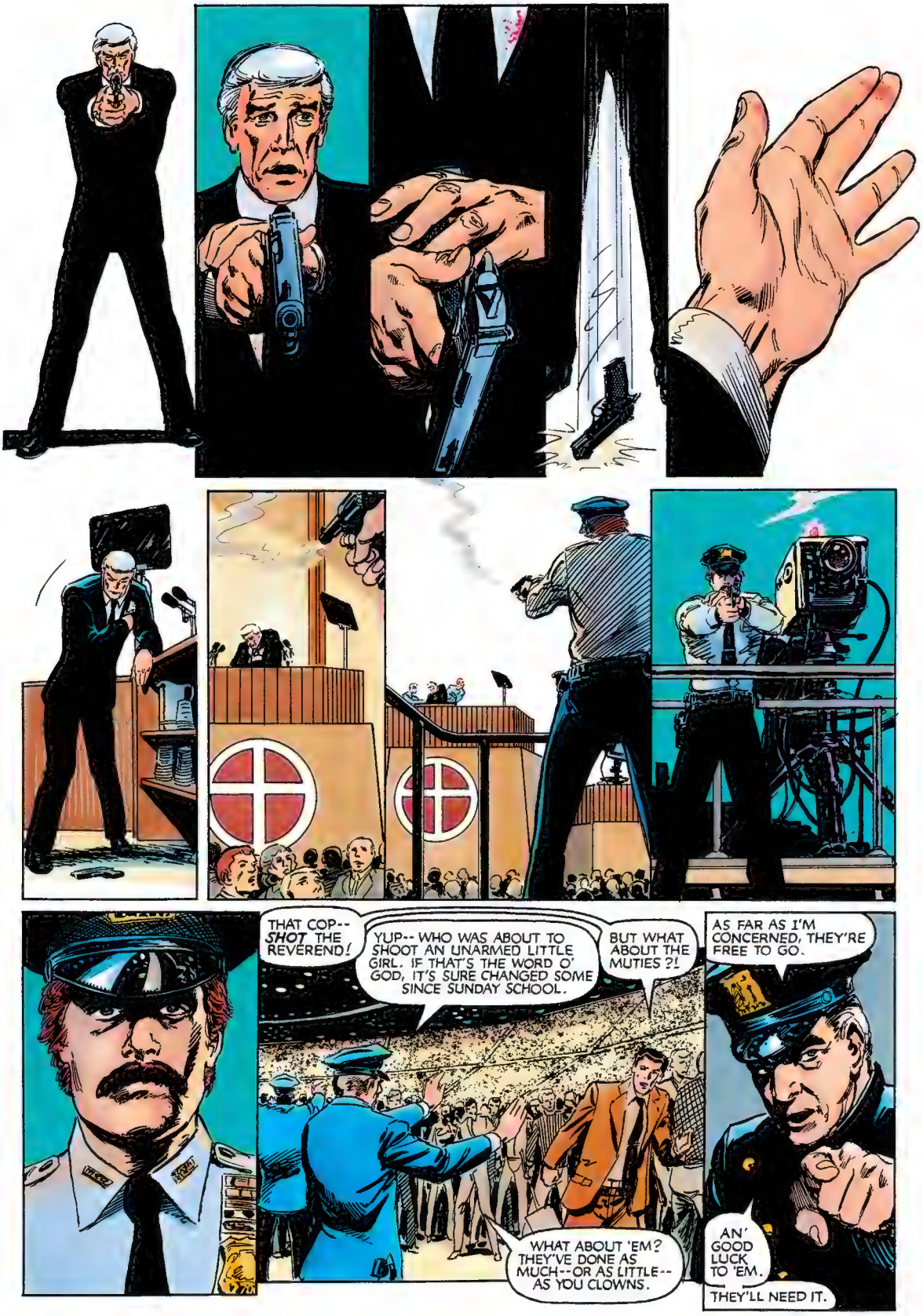

YOU DON'T CARE! DO THE LIVES OF THE FAITHFUL MEAN NOTHING TO YOU?
I AM SET UPON A RIGHTEOUS COURSE, ANNE. NOTHING-- AND NO ONE-- WILL DETER ME FROM IT!
A TRUE DAUGHTER OF HEAVEN WOULD HAVE ACCEPTED HER FATE.
YOUR RESISTANCE REVEALS YOUR TRUE ALLEGIANCE.
MUTANT HELLSPAWN-- I DENY YOU!
I CAST YOU FOREVER INTO THE ABYSS!
REVEREND-- NO!
IS THIS THEN THE HOLY WORD, REVEREND--
--THAT ANY WHO OPPOSE YOU MUST DIE?
SHUT UP, MUTIE! THIS IS YOUR FAULT!
WAIT A MINUTE-- WHAT HE'S SAYIN' MAKES SENSE!
LET'S GET THE FREAK!
NOBODY'S GETTIN' ANYBODY, CAPICE?
TAKE A WALK, BUSTER, YOU AN' YOUR BUDDIES...
...WHILE YOU'RE STILL ABLE.

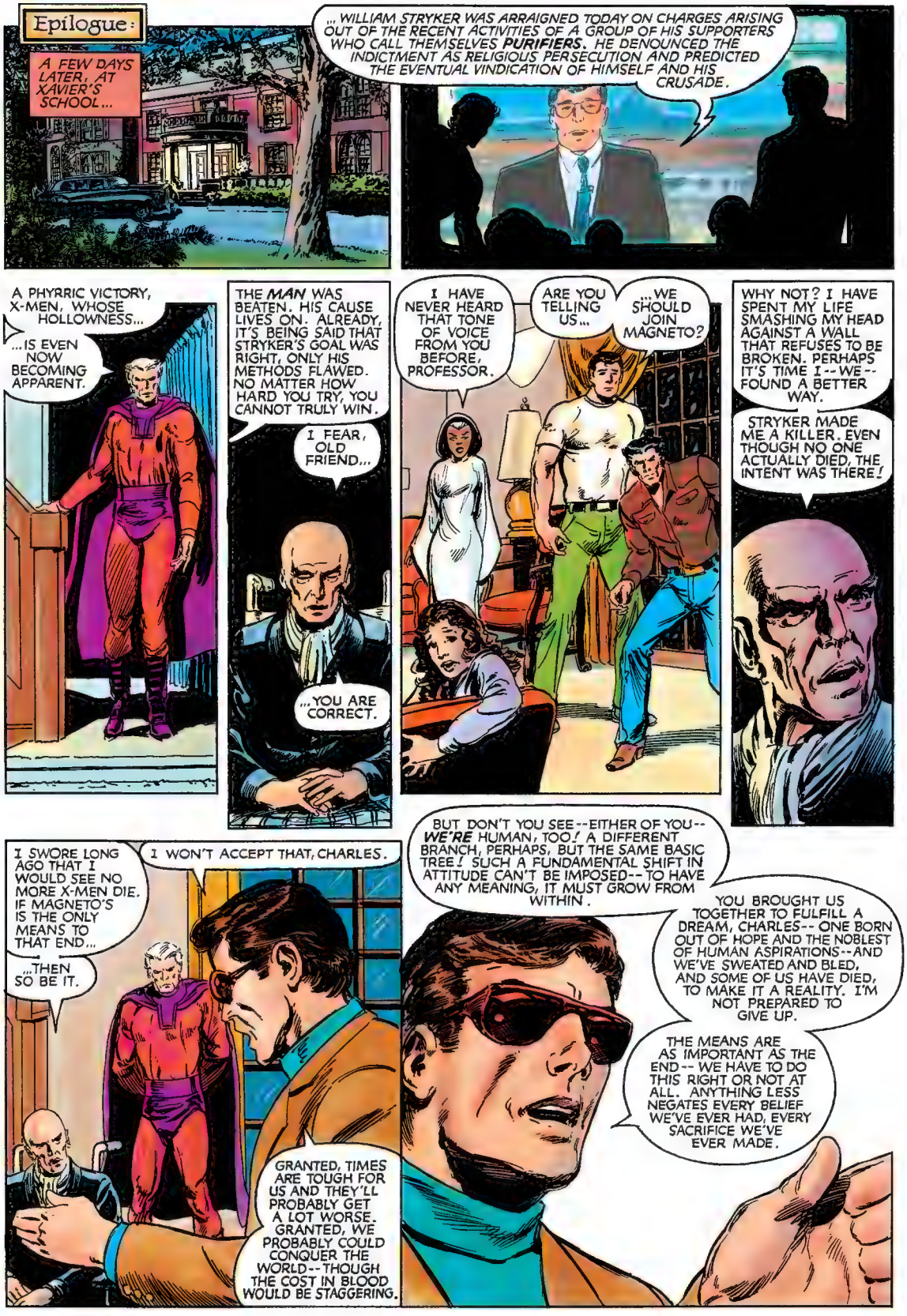

SUDDENLY...
WHAT THE HELL--?!
AN EXPLOSION! AND SMELL THAT SMOKE--THERE'S A FIRE, TOO!
THIS IS CAMERA ONE--NOTIFY THE POLICE THEY'D BETTER EVACUATE THE GARDEN, FAST! RON, KEEP FILMING, NO MATTER WHAT, 'TIL I SAY DIFFERENT!
SCOTTY, WE GOT NO CHOICE. WE HAVE TA PLAY IT MY WAY!
DO IT. AND GOOD LUCK.
I'M AFRAID A DOUBLE 'PORT WON'T BE PLEASANT.
I'VE RIDDEN THIS RIDE BEFORE, REMEMBER?
READY WHEN YOU ARE, ELF.
NIGHTCRAWLER AND WOLVERINE DISAPPEAR...
BAMF!
... AND CYCLOPS FIRES HIS OPTIC BLASTS, SEEMINGLY AT NOTHING.
THE TWO MEN ARRIVE AT THEIR DESTINATION.
CYCLOPS' SHOT REBOUNDS OFF A WALL...
...ANOTHER WALL.
XAVIER DEALS WITH THE OBVIOUS THREAT...
SNIKT!
...UNAWARE 'TIL IT'S TOO LATE...
CHOK
...THAT IT WAS MERELY A DIVERSION.

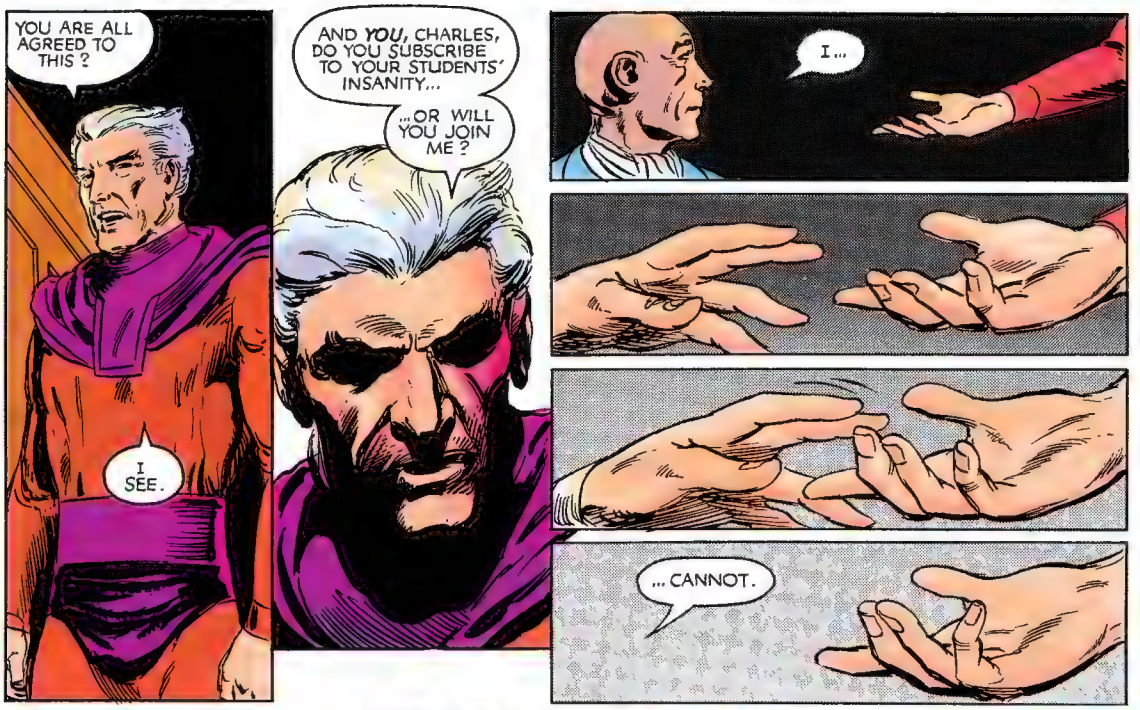

YOU CUT THINGS PRETTY FLAMIN' CLOSE, CYKE. CHARLEY NEARLY NAILED US.
I HAD TO. A MOMENT TOO SOON OR TOO LATE AND HE'D HAVE TELEPATHICALLY SPOTTED THE PLAN IN MY THOUGHTS AND COUNTERED IT. SAME WITH A DIRECT SHOT.
THE PROFESSOR'S GOOD, BUT HE LACKS OUR COMBAT TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE. I FIGURED HE'D HAVE PROBLEMS DEALING WITH SIMULTANEOUS ATTACKS FROM OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS. EITHER YOU OR I WOULD DO THE JOB.
CYKE, YOUR ZAP KAYO'D HIM. MY CLAWS WOULD'A KILLED.
I KNOW.
THIS TAKES CARE OF STRYKER'S MACHINE.
THEN IT IS FINISHED. WE HAVE WON.
THE FIGHT'S BARELY BEGUN, PETER.
BUT WITHOUT HIS MACHINE--OR THE PROFESSOR TO POWER IT--STRYKER IS BEATEN. SHOULD WE NOT GO BEFORE HE CAN SUMMON MORE PURIFIERS?
I'M NOT RUNNING.
IT ISN'T THE PURIFIERS WHO ARE DANGEROUS, BUT THE MAN HIMSELF. HIS BELIEFS. HIS IDEAS. IF WE DON'T STAND UP TO THOSE -- HERE AND NOW-- THEN ALL WE'VE DONE IS DELAY AN INEVITABLE HOLOCAUST.
ONE WAY OR THE OTHER--US OR HIM--IT ENDS TONIGHT.
SOUNDS GOOD T'ME.
AND ME, SCOTT.
COUNT ME IN.
WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?


AND SO, AFTER REMOVING PROFESSOR XAVIER TO SAFETY...
LOOK!
THEY'RE CRAZY!
MAYBE, BUT THEY GOT GUTS.
GOOD EVENING, REVEREND.
X-MEN--STORM AND CYCLOPS!
BUT YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE...
DEAD? WE'RE FULL OF SURPRISES, STRYKER, AS YOU'LL SOON SEE.
YOU'VE BEEN MAKING SOME PRETTY EXTREME CHARGES AGAINST US. WE FIGURE WE'D CLAIM EQUAL TIME TO ANSWER THEM. YOU DON'T MIND, DO YOU?
YOUR TOYS ARE BROKEN, REVEREND, YOUR GOONS ARE BEATEN-- IT'S JUST YOUR WORD AGAINST OURS.
THEN I HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR.
YOU'RE A LUCKY MAN. THANKS TO YOU-- AND PEOPLE LIKE YOU-- MUTANTS LIVE IN FEAR EVERY DAY OF OUR LIVES. AND SOMETIMES, THOSE LIVES ARE VERY SHORT. LESS THAN A WEEK AGO, TWO CHILDREN IN CONNECTICUT WERE MURDERED, STRYKER--CONDEMNED SOLELY FOR AN ACCIDENT OF BIRTH.
WOULD YOU DO THAT TO SOMEONE BECAUSE OF THE COLOR OF THEIR SKIN, OR THEIR BELIEFS?
I DO NOTHING, CYCLOPS. I AM AN INSTRUMENT OF THE LORD.
AND WHATEVER A MAN'S COLOR OR BELIEFS, HE IS STILL HUMAN. THOSE CHILDREN-- AND YOU X-MEN-- ARE NOT!
SAYS WHO? YOU? WHAT MAKES YOUR LINK WITH HEAVEN ANY STRONGER THAN MINE?
WE HAVE UNIQUE GIFTS-- BUT NO MORE SO, AND NO MORE SPECIAL, THAN THOSE GRANTED A PHYSICIAN OR PHYSICIST, OR PHILOSOPHER OR ATHLETE. IT COULD BE DUE TO AN ACCIDENT OF NATURE OR DIVINE PROVIDENCE, WHO'S TO SAY?
ARE ARBITRARY LABELS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE WAY WE LIVE OUR LIVES, WHAT WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT WE ACTUALLY ARE?!
FOR ALL YOU KNOW, WE COULD BE THE REAL HUMAN RACE...
... AND THE REST OF YOU, THE MUTANTS.
HUMAN?!
YOU DARE CALL THAT... THING-- HUMAN?!?

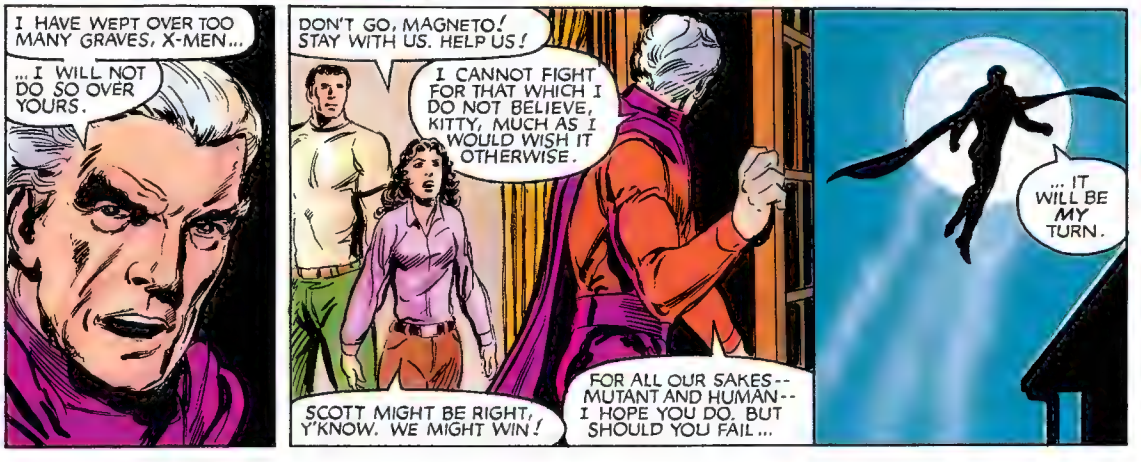
MORE HUMAN THAN YOU!
NIGHTCRAWLER'S GENEROUS AND KIND AND DECENT! HE HAD EVERY REASON TO BE BITTER, EVERY EXCUSE TO BECOME AS MUCH OF A DEMON INSIDE AND OUT. BUT HE DECIDED HE'D RATHER LEARN TO LAUGH INSTEAD!
I HOPE I CAN BE HALF THE PERSON HE IS. AND IF I HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN CARING FOR MY FRIEND AND BELIEVING IN YOUR GOD...
...THEN I CHOOSE... M-MY FRIEND!
...BE YOUR EPITAPH.
LET THOSE BLASPHEMOUS WORDS, GIRL...
BLAM!


THAT COP-- SHOT THE REVEREND!
YUP-- WHO WAS ABOUT TO SHOOT AN UNARMED LITTLE GIRL. IF THAT'S THE WORD O' GOD, IT'S SURE CHANGED SOME SINCE SUNDAY SCHOOL.
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE MUTIES?!
AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, THEY'RE FREE TO GO.
WHAT ABOUT 'EM? THEY'VE DONE AS MUCH--OR AS LITTLE-- AS YOU CLOWNS.
AN' GOOD LUCK TO 'EM.
THEY'LL NEED IT.


Epilogue:
A FEW DAYS LATER, AT XAVIER'S SCHOOL...
...WILLIAM STRYKER WAS ARRAIGNED TODAY ON CHARGES ARISING OUT OF THE RECENT ACTIVITIES OF A GROUP OF HIS SUPPORTERS WHO CALL THEMSELVES PURIFIERS. HE DENOUNCED THE INDICTMENT AS RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION AND PREDICTED THE EVENTUAL VINDICATION OF HIMSELF AND HIS CRUSADE.
A PHYRRIC VICTORY, X-MEN, WHOSE HOLLOWNESS...
...IS EVEN NOW BECOMING APPARENT.
THE MAN WAS BEATEN. HIS CAUSE LIVES ON. ALREADY, IT'S BEING SAID THAT STRYKER'S GOAL WAS RIGHT, ONLY HIS METHODS FLAWED. NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRY, YOU CANNOT TRULY WIN.
I FEAR, OLD FRIEND...
...YOU ARE CORRECT.
I HAVE NEVER HEARD THAT TONE OF VOICE FROM YOU BEFORE, PROFESSOR.
ARE YOU TELLING US...
...WE SHOULD JOIN MAGNETO?
WHY NOT? I HAVE SPENT MY LIFE SMASHING MY HEAD AGAINST A WALL THAT REFUSES TO BE BROKEN. PERHAPS IT'S TIME I--WE--FOUND A BETTER WAY.
STRYKER MADE ME A KILLER. EVEN THOUGH NO ONE ACTUALLY DIED, THE INTENT WAS THERE!
I SWORE LONG AGO THAT I WOULD SEE NO MORE X-MEN DIE. IF MAGNETO'S IS THE ONLY MEANS TO THAT END...
...THEN SO BE IT.
I WON'T ACCEPT THAT, CHARLES.
GRANTED, TIMES ARE TOUGH FOR US AND THEY'LL PROBABLY GET A LOT WORSE. GRANTED, WE PROBABLY COULD CONQUER THE WORLD--THOUGH THE COST IN BLOOD WOULD BE STAGGERING.
BUT DON'T YOU SEE--EITHER OF YOU--WE'RE HUMAN, TOO! A DIFFERENT BRANCH, PERHAPS, BUT THE SAME BASIC TREE! SUCH A FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT IN ATTITUDE CAN'T BE IMPOSED--TO HAVE ANY MEANING, IT MUST GROW FROM WITHIN.
YOU BROUGHT US TOGETHER TO FULFILL A DREAM, CHARLES--ONE BORN OUT OF HOPE AND THE NOBLEST OF HUMAN ASPIRATIONS--AND WE'VE SWEATED AND BLED, AND SOME OF US HAVE DIED, TO MAKE IT A REALITY. I'M NOT PREPARED TO GIVE UP.
THE MEANS ARE AS IMPORTANT AS THE END--WE HAVE TO DO THIS RIGHT OR NOT AT ALL. ANYTHING LESS NEGATES EVERY BELIEF WE'VE EVER HAD, EVERY SACRIFICE WE'VE EVER MADE.


YOU ARE ALL AGREED TO THIS ?
I SEE.
AND YOU, CHARLES, DO YOU SUBSCRIBE TO YOUR STUDENTS' INSANITY...
...OR WILL YOU JOIN ME ?
I...
... CANNOT.

AS YOU REMINDED ME, MAGNUS, I TAUGHT THEM. I GAVE THEM THEIR REASON FOR BEING. I CANNOT DESERT THEM.
IF THEY ARE WILLING TO GIVE MY DREAM A CHANCE, THEN SO AM I.
YOU ARE A FOOL!
YOU ARE ALL FOOLS!
MEBBE, BUT BY THE SAME TOKEN, CHUM...
...THE WORLD'S GOT NO SHORTAGE O' WINDMILLS T' TILT AT.


I HAVE WEPT OVER TOO MANY GRAVES, X-MEN...
...I WILL NOT DO SO OVER YOURS.
DON'T GO, MAGNETO! STAY WITH US. HELP US!
I CANNOT FIGHT FOR THAT WHICH I DO NOT BELIEVE, KITTY, MUCH AS I WOULD WISH IT OTHERWISE.
SCOTT MIGHT BE RIGHT, Y'KNOW. WE MIGHT WIN!
FOR ALL OUR SAKES-- MUTANT AND HUMAN-- I HOPE YOU DO. BUT SHOULD YOU FAIL...
...IT WILL BE MY TURN.

I FEEL SO... ASHAMED.
TO BE PROVEN ONLY HUMAN, AS FLAWED AND VULNERABLE AS THE REST OF US?
WHERE'S THE SHAME IN THAT?
WHERE INDEED?
I OWE YOU MORE THAN I CAN EVER REPAY.
IF EVER THERE WAS A MOMENT WHICH JUSTIFIED MY CREATION OF THE X-MEN, THIS IS IT.
OH-- THANK YOU, KURT.
PRECISELY WHAT I NEED.
WOULD YOU MIND SOME COMPANY, SCOTT?
NEVER SAY NO TO A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, ESPECIALLY WHEN SHE'S A FRIEND.
I HAVE NEVER BEEN MORE PROUD OF YOU. YOU SAID WHAT WAS IN OUR HEARTS, BOTH HERE AND AT THE GARDEN.
I THINK FOR A MOMENT YOU UNNERVED THE PROFESSOR-- YOU BECAME THE TEACHER AND HE, THE PUPIL.
LABELS AGAIN. THE HELL WITH 'EM.
HE WAS IN NEED. I HELPED HIM. AS HE WOULD ME.
THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT, REALLY.
NEEDING AND HELPING. CARING FOR ONE ANOTHER.
AND FROM THAT CARING COMES LOVE.
WHICH MAKES THE WORLD GO 'ROUND.
IF ONLY THAT WERE SO.
FIN

MUTIE

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THE UNCANNY
X-MEN™
TM
DMG 11-82

A **Stan Lee** PRESENTATION, STARRING THE *UNCANNY* **X-MEN!**

BROUGHT TO YOU BY...

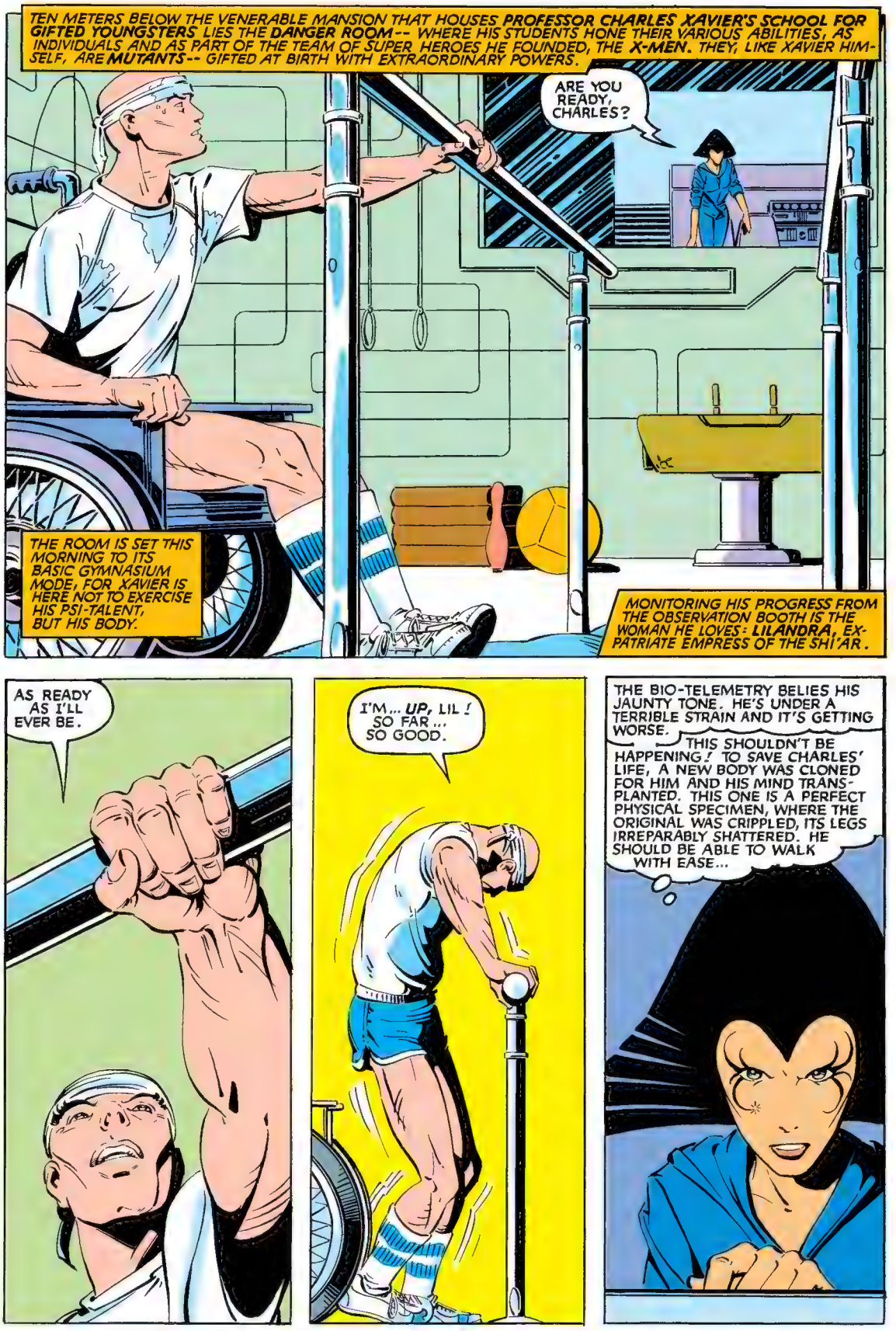
CHRIS CLAREMONT *WRITER* | **PAUL SMITH** *PENCILER* | **BOB WIACEK** *INKER* | TOM ORZECHOWSKI, *LETTERER* GLYNIS WEIN, *COLORIST* | **LOUISE JONES** *EDITOR* | **JIM SHOOTER** *ED. IN CHIEF*

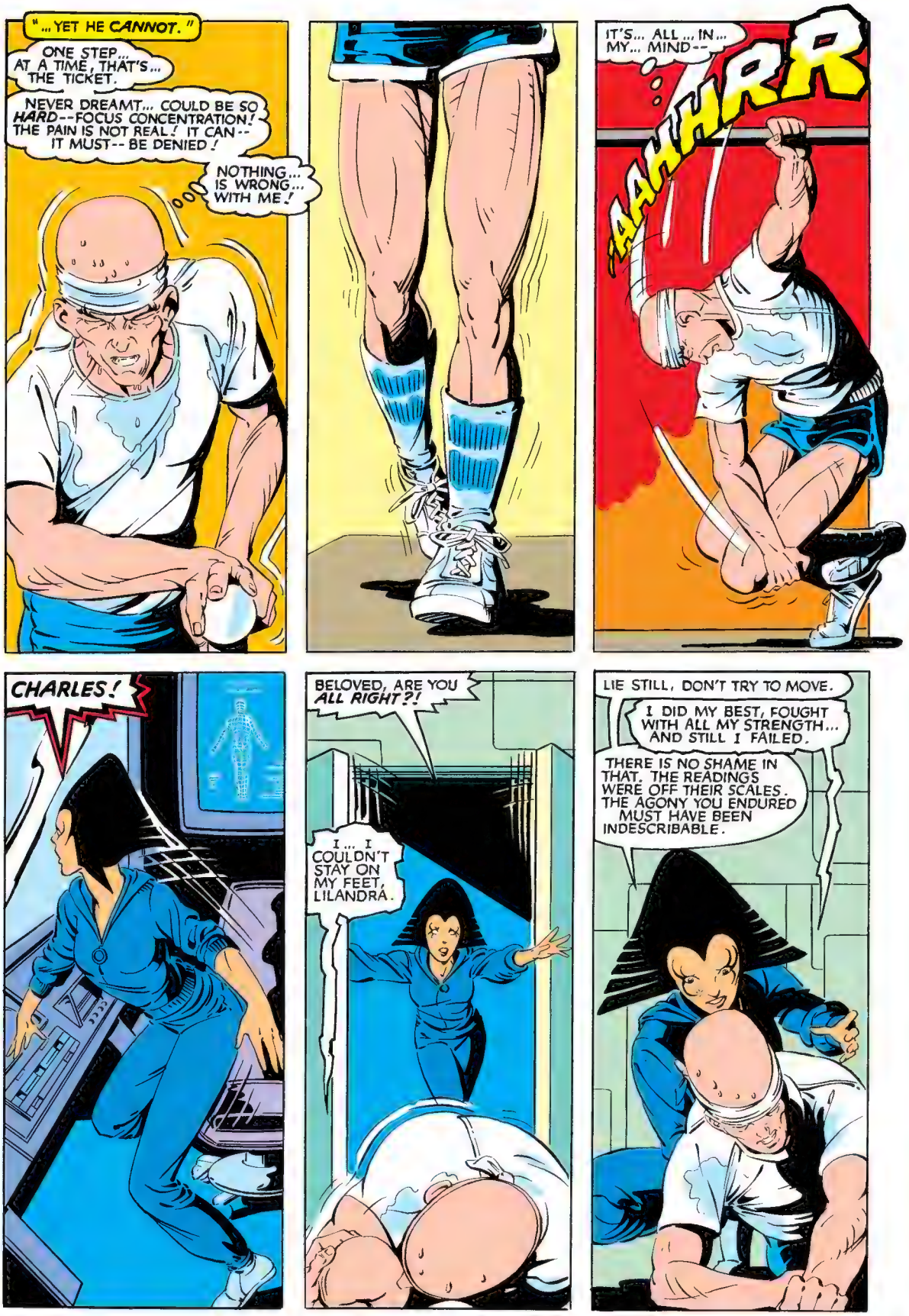
PROFESSOR XAVIER IS A JERK!

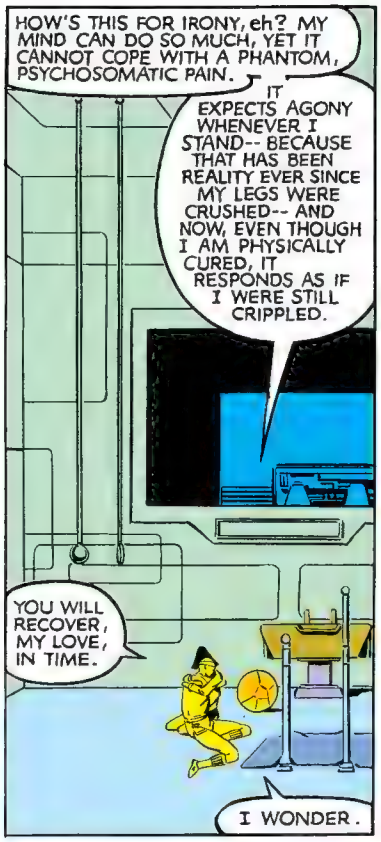
HE'S THE CRUELEST, MEANEST, MOST HEARTLESS MAN ON EARTH!
HE'S DOING WHAT HE THINKS BEST, KITTY.
IT ISN'T FAIR, ILLYANA! I'VE EARNED MY PLACE AMONG THE X-MEN, ALL OF THEM SAY SO-- WHY WON'T THE PROFESSOR LISTEN?!
WHY IS HE TREATING ME LIKE A CHILD?!?
BECAUSE YOU'RE ACTING LIKE ONE?
SOME FRIEND YOU ARE.
I AM YOUR FRIEND, DUMMY. THAT'S HOW COME I CAN TALK TO YOU LIKE THIS.
YOU'VE BEEN RANTING NON-STOP-- MAKING EVERYONE'S LIFE MISERABLE--EVER SINCE YOU WERE SHIFTED FROM THE X-MEN TO THE TRAINEE TEAM, THE NEW MUTANTS. IT'S GETTING BORING!
AND DON'T TELL ME WHAT IS OR ISN'T FAIR. YOU DIDN'T SPEND HALF YOUR LIFE IN A DAEMONIC LIMBO.
Oh, ILLYANA, I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT YOU.
WHAT'S DONE IS DONE, KITTY. WISHING--OR GRIPING-- WON'T CHANGE A THING.
BUT IF WE DON'T HURRY, WE'LL MISS THE BUS INTO SALEM CENTER, WHICH MEANS WE'LL MISS DANCE CLASS, AND IF THAT HAPPENS--
--YOU'LL REALLY HAVE CAUSE TO BE MISERABLE.
THE GIRLS RACE DOWN THE DRIVE TOWARDS GRAY-MALKIN LANE...
...UNAWARE THAT THEY'RE BEING WATCHED...

... BY ALIEN EYES.
HE HASN'T BEEN HERE LONG...
HE HATES THE WEATHER...
... AND THE HUNTING HAS BEEN POOR.
THAT, HE DECIDES, IS ABOUT TO CHANGE.
MOST'A MY LIFE I'VE BEEN A LONER, ELF -- BY CHOICE.
SOMETIMES A BODY NEEDS SOLITUDE. THIS IS ONE OF 'EM.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING, MEIN FREUND?
NORTH AN' WEST, TO HOME GROUND-- THE CANADIAN ROCKIES.
I SHOULD BE BACK IN A COUPLE'A WEEKS. TRY NOT TO NEED ME 'TIL THEN.
AFTER WHAT WE'VE BEEN THROUGH, WOLVERINE, A VACATION WILL DO US ALL SOME GOOD.
THERE'RE KITTY AND ILLYANA.
DO YOU MIND IF WE GIVE THEM A LIFT TO TOWN AS I DRIVE YOU TO THE AIRPORT?
NOPE.
I WISH I KNEW SOME WAY TO CHEER KITTY UP. SHE'S BEEN IN SUCH A FOUL MOOD LATELY.
WITH GOOD REASON, PAL. CHARLEY GAVE HER A RAW DEAL.

DO YOU REALLY THINK SO, WOLVERINE ?
ISN'T SHE A LITTLE *YOUNG* TO BE A SUPER HERO? OURS *IS* A HIGHLY DANGEROUS PROFESSION.
SO'S WAR. NOT SO LONG AGO, BOYS OF TWELVE WENT TO SEA AS NAVAL MIDSHIPMEN, EXPECTED TO CONDUCT THEMSELVES AS OFFICERS AND ADULTS.
AN' WHAT'S WITH THIS CHANGE OF HEART, NIGHTCRAWLER ?
YOU ARGUED JUST AS VEHEMENTLY AS THE REST OF US WHEN CHARLEY MADE HIS DECISION.
I LIKE TO UNDER-STAND BOTH SIDES OF A QUESTION.
MANY OF THOSE MIDSHIPMEN WERE WOUNDED, MAIMED, KILLED. DO WE WANT SUCH A FATE FOR KITTY? HAVE WE THE RIGHT TO PLACE HER -- A CHILD -- AT RISK ?
WE'RE "*AT RISK*" FROM THE MOMENT OF CONCEPTION, PAL. THERE ARE NO GUARANTEES FOR ANYONE, ANYWHERE.
SHE COULD BE KILLED OR INJURED JUST AS EASILY LIVIN' A "*NORMAL*" LIFE.
THERE'S BEEN NO OPPORTUNITY TO PROPER-LY DETERMINE THE EXTENT AND CAPABILITY OF HER POWERS. WITHOUT KNOW-ING WHAT SHE CAN OR CANNOT DO...
...SHE COULD BE AS GREAT A LIABILITY TO THE X-MEN AS AN ASSET, *NICHT WAHR?*
I CAN'T DENY THAT.
SO PERHAPS *HERR PROFESSOR'S* DEAL WASN'T QUITE SO RAW AFTER ALL ?
A DECISION CAN BE LOGICAL, AN' SENSIBLE-- AN' STILL WRONG.
SINCE THE KID JOINED, SHE'S FUNCTIONED AS A FULL-FLEDGED X-MAN-- SHE'S FACED DEATH AN' WORSE--AN' NEVER LET US DOWN. SHE'S PROVED HER WORTH. T'ME, THAT CANCELS EVERY OTHER ARGUMENT.
TO ME, ALSO, UNFORTUNATELY...
...WE AREN'T THE ONES WHO NEED CONVINCING.


TEN METERS BELOW THE VENERABLE MANSION THAT HOUSES PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS LIES THE DANGER ROOM -- WHERE HIS STUDENTS HONE THEIR VARIOUS ABILITIES, AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS PART OF THE TEAM OF SUPER HEROES HE FOUNDED, THE X-MEN. THEY, LIKE XAVIER HIMSELF, ARE MUTANTS -- GIFTED AT BIRTH WITH EXTRAORDINARY POWERS.
ARE YOU READY, CHARLES?
THE ROOM IS SET THIS MORNING TO ITS BASIC GYMNASIUM MODE, FOR XAVIER IS HERE NOT TO EXERCISE HIS PSI-TALENT, BUT HIS BODY.
MONITORING HIS PROGRESS FROM THE OBSERVATION BOOTH IS THE WOMAN HE LOVES: LILANDRA, EX-PATRIATE EMPRESS OF THE SHI'AR.
AS READY AS I'LL EVER BE.
I'M... UP, LIL! SO FAR... SO GOOD.
THE BIO-TELEMETRY BELIES HIS JAUNTY TONE. HE'S UNDER A TERRIBLE STRAIN AND IT'S GETTING WORSE.
THIS SHOULDN'T BE HAPPENING! TO SAVE CHARLES' LIFE, A NEW BODY WAS CLONED FOR HIM AND HIS MIND TRANSPLANTED. THIS ONE IS A PERFECT PHYSICAL SPECIMEN, WHERE THE ORIGINAL WAS CRIPPLED, ITS LEGS IRREPARABLY SHATTERED. HE SHOULD BE ABLE TO WALK WITH EASE...


"...YET HE CANNOT."
ONE STEP... AT A TIME, THAT'S... THE TICKET.
NEVER DREAMT... COULD BE SO HARD--FOCUS CONCENTRATION! THE PAIN IS NOT REAL! IT CAN-- IT MUST-- BE DENIED!
NOTHING... IS WRONG... WITH ME!
IT'S... ALL... IN... MY... MIND--
AAHRR
CHARLES!
BELOVED, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
I... I COULDN'T STAY ON MY FEET, LILANDRA.
LIE STILL, DON'T TRY TO MOVE.
I DID MY BEST, FOUGHT WITH ALL MY STRENGTH... AND STILL I FAILED.
THERE IS NO SHAME IN THAT. THE READINGS WERE OFF THEIR SCALES. THE AGONY YOU ENDURED MUST HAVE BEEN INDESCRIBABLE.

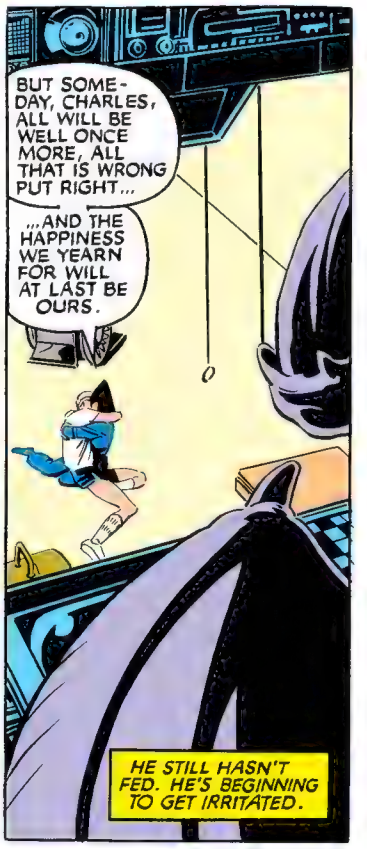

HOW'S THIS FOR IRONY, eh? MY MIND CAN DO SO MUCH, YET IT CANNOT COPE WITH A PHANTOM, PSYCHOSOMATIC PAIN.
IT EXPECTS AGONY WHENEVER I STAND-- BECAUSE THAT HAS BEEN REALITY EVER SINCE MY LEGS WERE CRUSHED-- AND NOW, EVEN THOUGH I AM PHYSICALLY CURED, IT RESPONDS AS IF I WERE STILL CRIPPLED.
YOU WILL RECOVER, MY LOVE, IN TIME.
I WONDER.

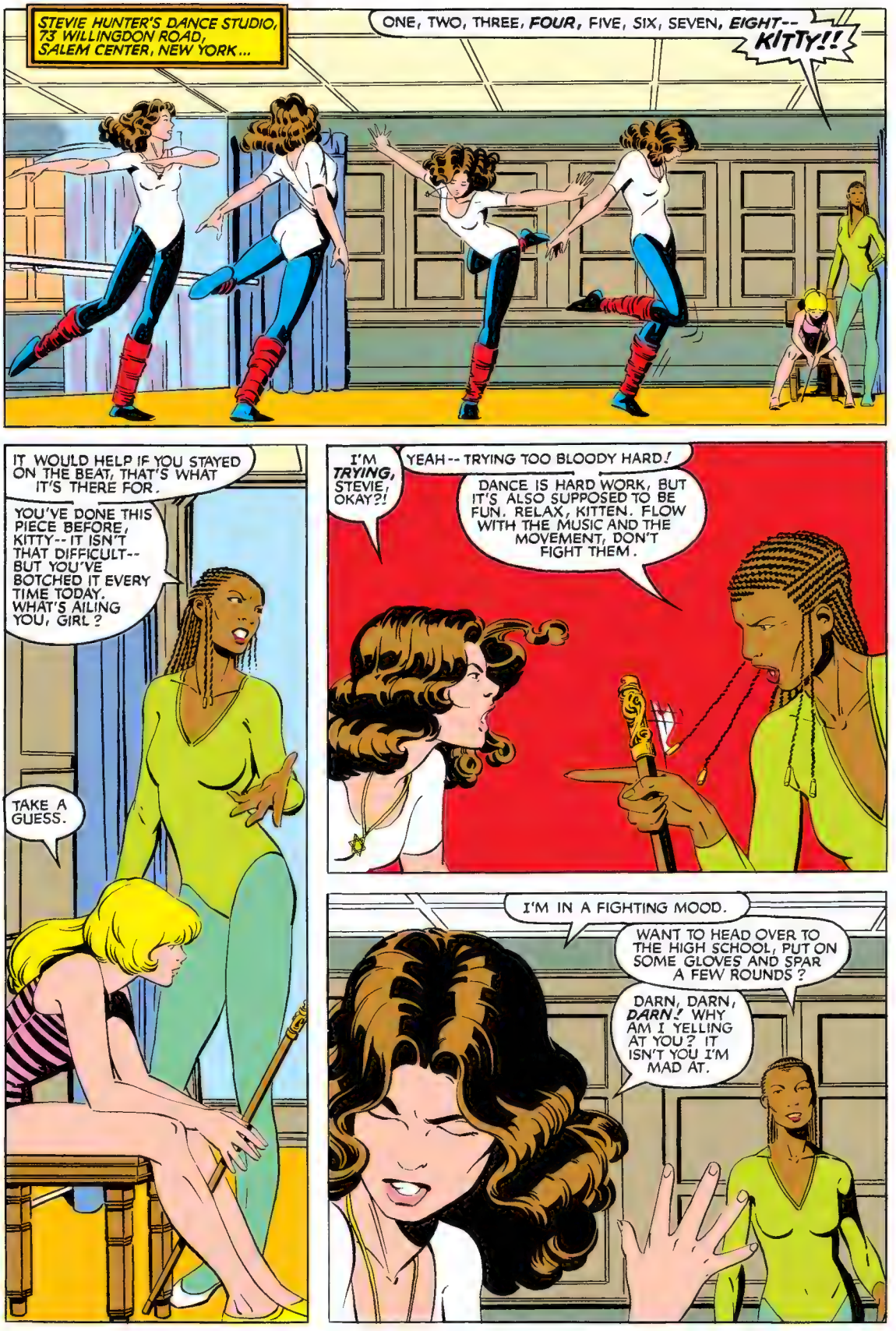
I CAN COPE, BUT ONLY BY FOCUSING ALL MY WILL, MY RESOURCES, TO THE EXTENT THAT I CANNOT THEN DRAW ON ANY OF MY PSIONIC POWERS. AND THE EXPERIENCE-- EVEN AS SHORT A ONE AS THIS-- IS SO DEBILITATING THAT I'M VIRTUALLY HELPLESS FOR SOME TIME AFTERWARDS.
MY CHOICE, EVIDENTLY, IS MY WALKING VERSUS MY USEFULNESS TO THE X-MEN.

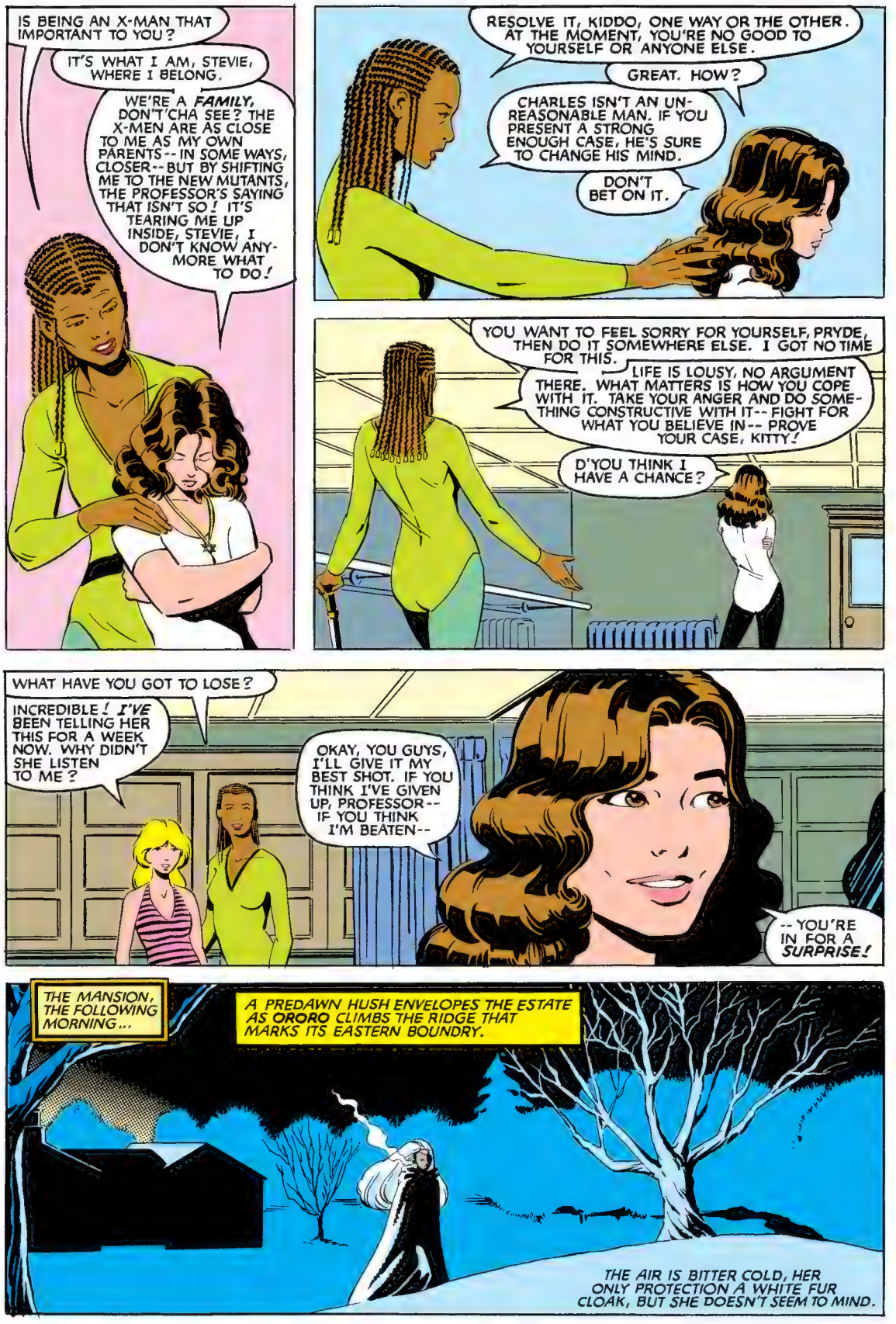
AND YOU WILL SACRIFICE PERSONAL DESIRE FOR DUTY?
I SUPPOSE-- WHY? YOU LOOK TROUBLED, LIL, WHAT IS IT?
WHEN THE STARJAMMERS LEAVE EARTH, I AM GOING WITH THEM. MY SISTER, DEATHBIRD, IS MAD, CHARLES--I CANNOT ABANDON MY EMPIRE TO HER. I MUST TRY TO REGAIN MY THRONE.
STAY, LILANDRA, PLEASE. I NEED YOU.
COME WITH ME.

I DID SO ONCE BEFORE, REMEMBER? AND THAT DECISION COST JEAN GREY HER LIFE.
DO YOU BLAME ME FOR THAT?
NO. THE FAULT WAS MINE. HER FATE WAS SEALED, I FEAR, THE DAY WE MET.

BUT THERE ARE MORE MUTANTS APPEARING EVERY DAY, AND I SEEM TO BE THE ONLY PERSON PREPARED-- AND EQUIPPED-- TO HELP THEM. HOW CAN I ABANDON MY TRUST? HOW COULD I LIVE WITH MYSELF IF I DID?
WOULD YOU HAVE ME BE LESS HONORABLE THAN YOU? WE BOTH HAVE COMMITMENTS WE CANNOT DENY.


BUT SOMEDAY, CHARLES, ALL WILL BE WELL ONCE MORE, ALL THAT IS WRONG PUT RIGHT...
...AND THE HAPPINESS WE YEARN FOR WILL AT LAST BE OURS.
HE STILL HASN'T FED. HE'S BEGINNING TO GET IRRITATED.


STEVIE HUNTER'S DANCE STUDIO, 73 WILLINGDON ROAD, SALEM CENTER, NEW YORK...
ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE, SIX, SEVEN, EIGHT--
KITTY!!
IT WOULD HELP IF YOU STAYED ON THE BEAT, THAT'S WHAT IT'S THERE FOR.
YOU'VE DONE THIS PIECE BEFORE, KITTY-- IT ISN'T THAT DIFFICULT-- BUT YOU'VE BOTCHED IT EVERY TIME TODAY. WHAT'S AILING YOU, GIRL?
TAKE A GUESS.
I'M TRYING, STEVIE, OKAY?!
YEAH-- TRYING TOO BLOODY HARD!
DANCE IS HARD WORK, BUT IT'S ALSO SUPPOSED TO BE FUN. RELAX, KITTEN. FLOW WITH THE MUSIC AND THE MOVEMENT, DON'T FIGHT THEM.
I'M IN A FIGHTING MOOD.
WANT TO HEAD OVER TO THE HIGH SCHOOL, PUT ON SOME GLOVES AND SPAR A FEW ROUNDS?
DARN, DARN, DARN! WHY AM I YELLING AT YOU? IT ISN'T YOU I'M MAD AT.


IS BEING AN X-MAN THAT IMPORTANT TO YOU?
IT'S WHAT I AM, STEVIE, WHERE I BELONG.
WE'RE A FAMILY, DON'T'CHA SEE? THE X-MEN ARE AS CLOSE TO ME AS MY OWN PARENTS -- IN SOME WAYS, CLOSER -- BUT BY SHIFTING ME TO THE NEW MUTANTS, THE PROFESSOR'S SAYING THAT ISN'T SO! IT'S TEARING ME UP INSIDE, STEVIE, I DON'T KNOW ANY-MORE WHAT TO DO!
RESOLVE IT, KIDDO, ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. AT THE MOMENT, YOU'RE NO GOOD TO YOURSELF OR ANYONE ELSE.
GREAT. HOW?
CHARLES ISN'T AN UN-REASONABLE MAN. IF YOU PRESENT A STRONG ENOUGH CASE, HE'S SURE TO CHANGE HIS MIND.
DON'T BET ON IT.
YOU WANT TO FEEL SORRY FOR YOURSELF, PRYDE, THEN DO IT SOMEWHERE ELSE. I GOT NO TIME FOR THIS.
LIFE IS LOUSY, NO ARGUMENT THERE. WHAT MATTERS IS HOW YOU COPE WITH IT. TAKE YOUR ANGER AND DO SOME-THING CONSTRUCTIVE WITH IT -- FIGHT FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN -- PROVE YOUR CASE, KITTY!
D'YOU THINK I HAVE A CHANCE?
WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO LOSE?
INCREDIBLE! I'VE BEEN TELLING HER THIS FOR A WEEK NOW. WHY DIDN'T SHE LISTEN TO ME?
OKAY, YOU GUYS, I'LL GIVE IT MY BEST SHOT. IF YOU THINK I'VE GIVEN UP, PROFESSOR -- IF YOU THINK I'M BEATEN --
-- YOU'RE IN FOR A SURPRISE!
THE MANSION, THE FOLLOWING MORNING...
A PREDAWN HUSH ENVELOPES THE ESTATE AS ORORO CLIMBS THE RIDGE THAT MARKS ITS EASTERN BOUNDRY.
THE AIR IS BITTER COLD, HER ONLY PROTECTION A WHITE FUR CLOAK, BUT SHE DOESN'T SEEM TO MIND.

HER MUTANT GIFT IS THE ABILITY TO CONTROL THE WEATHER. NONE OF ITS MANIFESTATIONS CAN DIRECTLY HARM HER.
I HAVE BEEN AWAY FROM EARTH TOO LONG.
IT IS GOOD TO BE HOME.
SHE HAS TRAVELLED FAR, ENDURED MUCH, THESE PAST MONTHS-- BUT ALL THAT SHE PUTS BEHIND HER AS SHE FACES THE SUNRISE...
... AND OPENS HERSELF TO ITS RADIANCE, RESTORING AND REPLENISHING HER PHYSICAL AND PSYCHIC LINKS WITH HER MOTHER WORLD. IT IS A MOMENT OF TRANSCENDENT BEAUTY.
BUT THE PERFECTION IS FLEETING...
... AS CLOUDS APPEAR FROM NOWHERE TO OCCLUDE THE SUN AND SHATTER ORORO'S SERENITY.
I DIDN'T SUMMON THIS STORM-- WHAT IS HAPPENING?!
A WIND-- I CAN'T RESIST IT-- BLOWING ME OFF THE RIDGE!
MY TEETH-- CHATTERING-- I... I'M COLD!
BUT MY BODY IS IMMUNE TO TEMPERATURE VARIATIONS.
IT'S OVER-- WIND, LIGHTNING, EVERYTHING-- AS SUDDENLY AS IT BEGAN.
I ATTEMPTED A COMMUNION WITH THE PRIMAL, ELEMENTAL FORCES OF THE EARTH-- THOSE WHICH SUSTAIN MY POWER AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, MY SOUL-- AND THEY HAVE DENIED ME! WHY?! WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?!?
EVEN AS SHE VOICES HER ANGUISHED CRY, SHE SUSPECTS THE ANSWER--AND THAT REALIZATION CHILLS HER HEART FAR MORE THAN THE AIR DOES HER BONES.

THE DAYS PASS AND KITTY IS TRUE TO HER WORD. AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY, SHE CORNERS XAVIER, TRYING EVERY WHICH WAY SHE KNOWS TO PERSUADE HIM TO CHANGE HIS MIND.

UNFORTUNATELY, LOGIC PROVES NO MORE EFFECTIVE...

... I CAN GO PLACES NIGHTCRAWLER CAN'T. NO PRISON CAN HOLD ME AND DARN FEW WEAPONS CAN HURT ME. I'M SMART.

Oh -- CHECK-MATE, PROFESSOR.

...THAN PASSION...

I SAVED THE X-MEN'S LIVES, PROFESSOR, MORE THAN ONCE!

THEY NEED ME -- AND YOU KNOW IT -- ONLY YOU'RE TOO PIG-HEADED AND STUBBORN TO ADMIT IT!

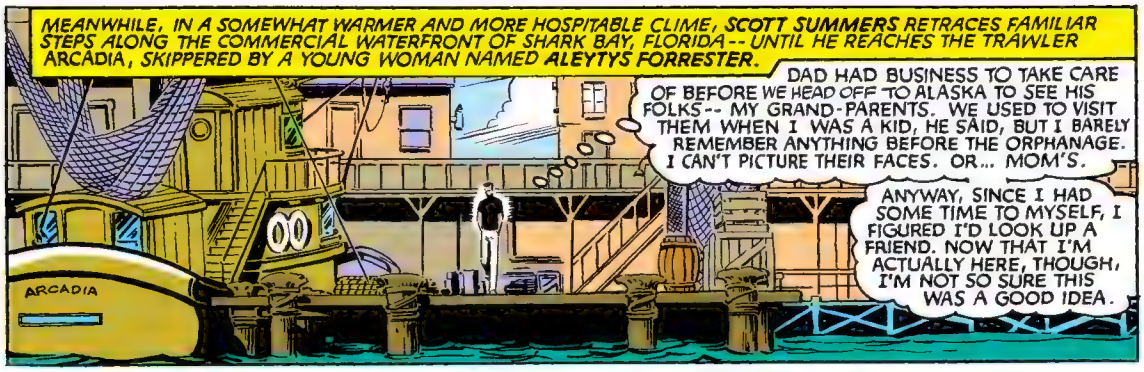
...OR CO-OPERATION...

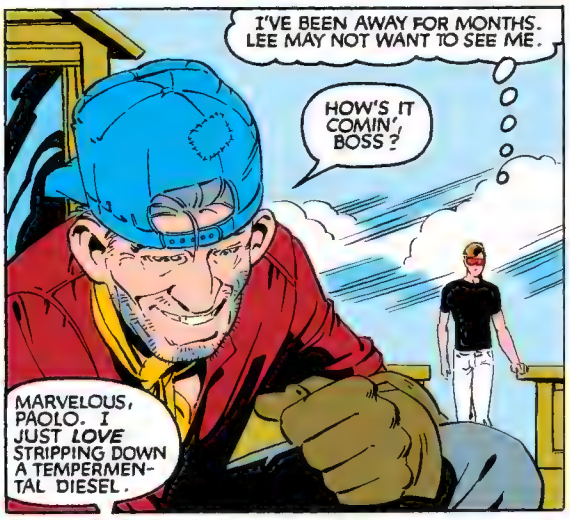
WHERE D'YOU WANT THIS STUFF, PROFESSOR?

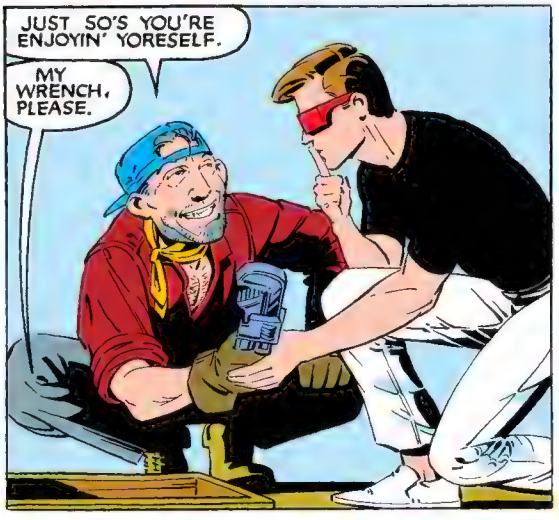
YOU WERE RIGHT! I CAN PHASE OBJECTS ALONG WITH ME. AND THE MORE I PRACTICE -- AND HONE MY CONCENTRATION -- THE GREATER THE MASS I CAN AFFECT.

...OR FLATTERY.

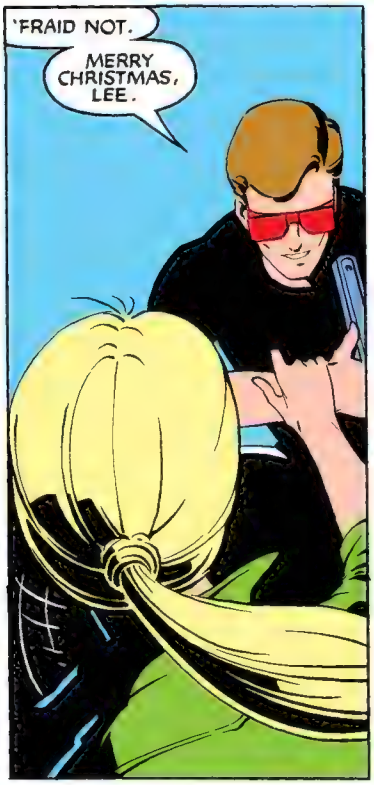
GOSH, PROFESSOR, I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'D DO WITHOUT YOU. I TELL EVERYONE THAT MY PROFESSOR'S THE HANDSOMEST, NICEST, MOST WONDERFUL MAN...

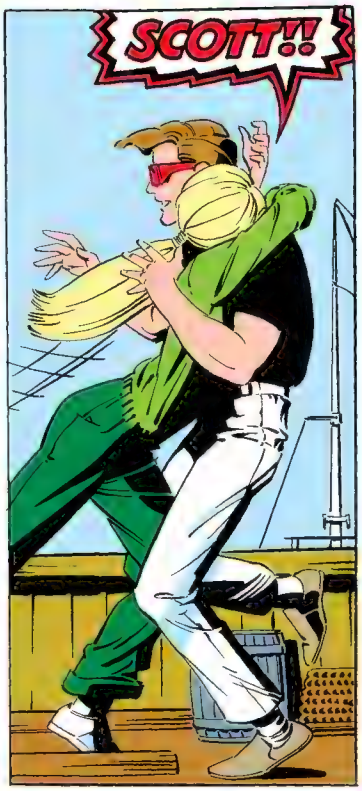

MEANWHILE, IN A SOMEWHAT WARMER AND MORE HOSPITABLE CLIME, SCOTT SUMMERS RETRACES FAMILIAR STEPS ALONG THE COMMERCIAL WATERFRONT OF SHARK BAY, FLORIDA -- UNTIL HE REACHES THE TRAWLER ARCADIA, SKIPPERED BY A YOUNG WOMAN NAMED ALEYTYS FORRESTER.
DAD HAD BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF BEFORE WE HEAD OFF TO ALASKA TO SEE HIS FOLKS -- MY GRAND-PARENTS. WE USED TO VISIT THEM WHEN I WAS A KID, HE SAID, BUT I BARELY REMEMBER ANYTHING BEFORE THE ORPHANAGE. I CAN'T PICTURE THEIR FACES. OR... MOM'S.
ANYWAY, SINCE I HAD SOME TIME TO MYSELF, I FIGURED I'D LOOK UP A FRIEND. NOW THAT I'M ACTUALLY HERE, THOUGH, I'M NOT SO SURE THIS WAS A GOOD IDEA.
ARCADIA

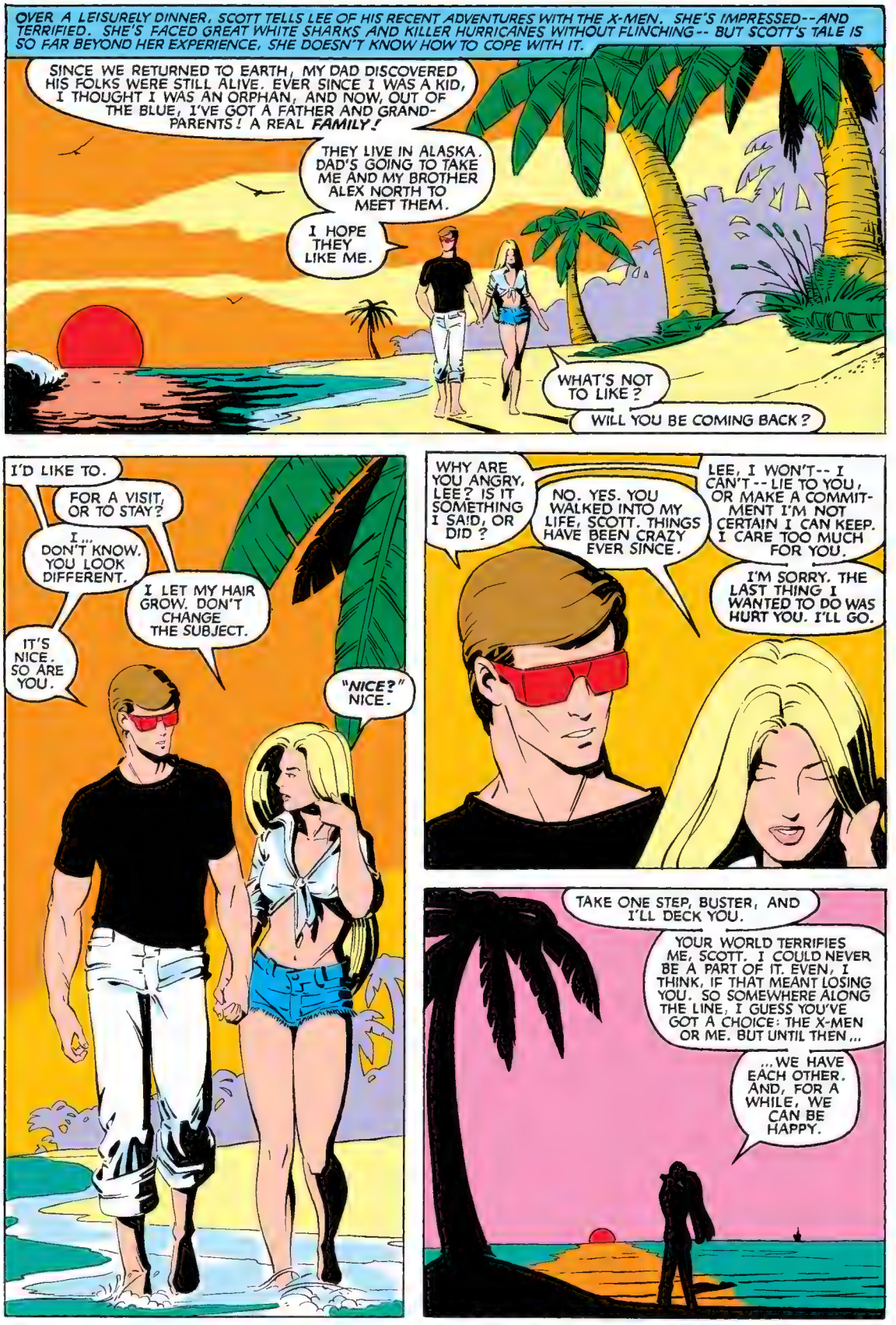

I'VE BEEN AWAY FOR MONTHS. LEE MAY NOT WANT TO SEE ME.
HOW'S IT COMIN', BOSS?
MARVELOUS, PAOLO. I JUST LOVE STRIPPING DOWN A TEMPERMENTAL DIESEL.

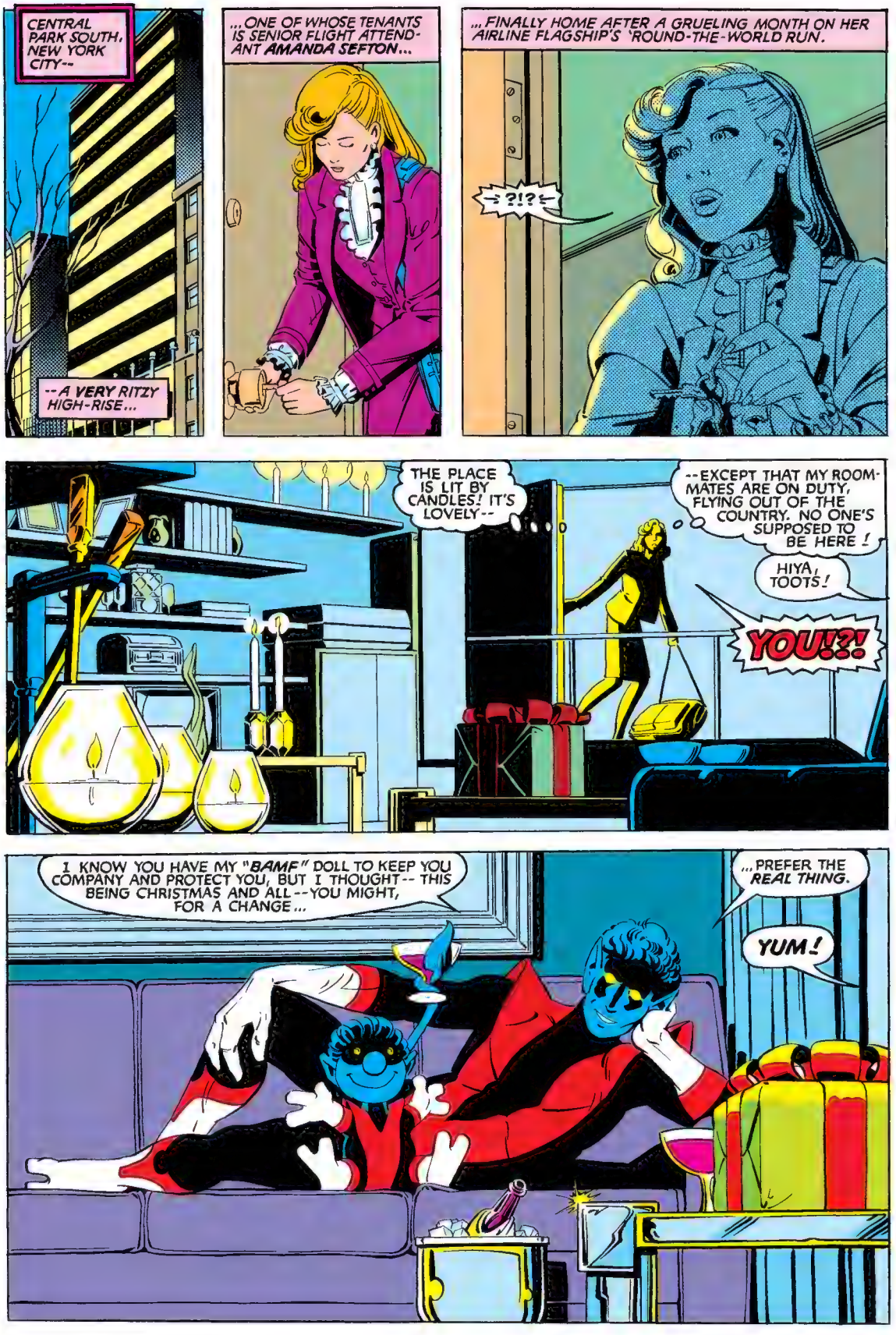

JUST SO'S YOU'RE ENJOYIN' YORESELF.
MY WRENCH, PLEASE.

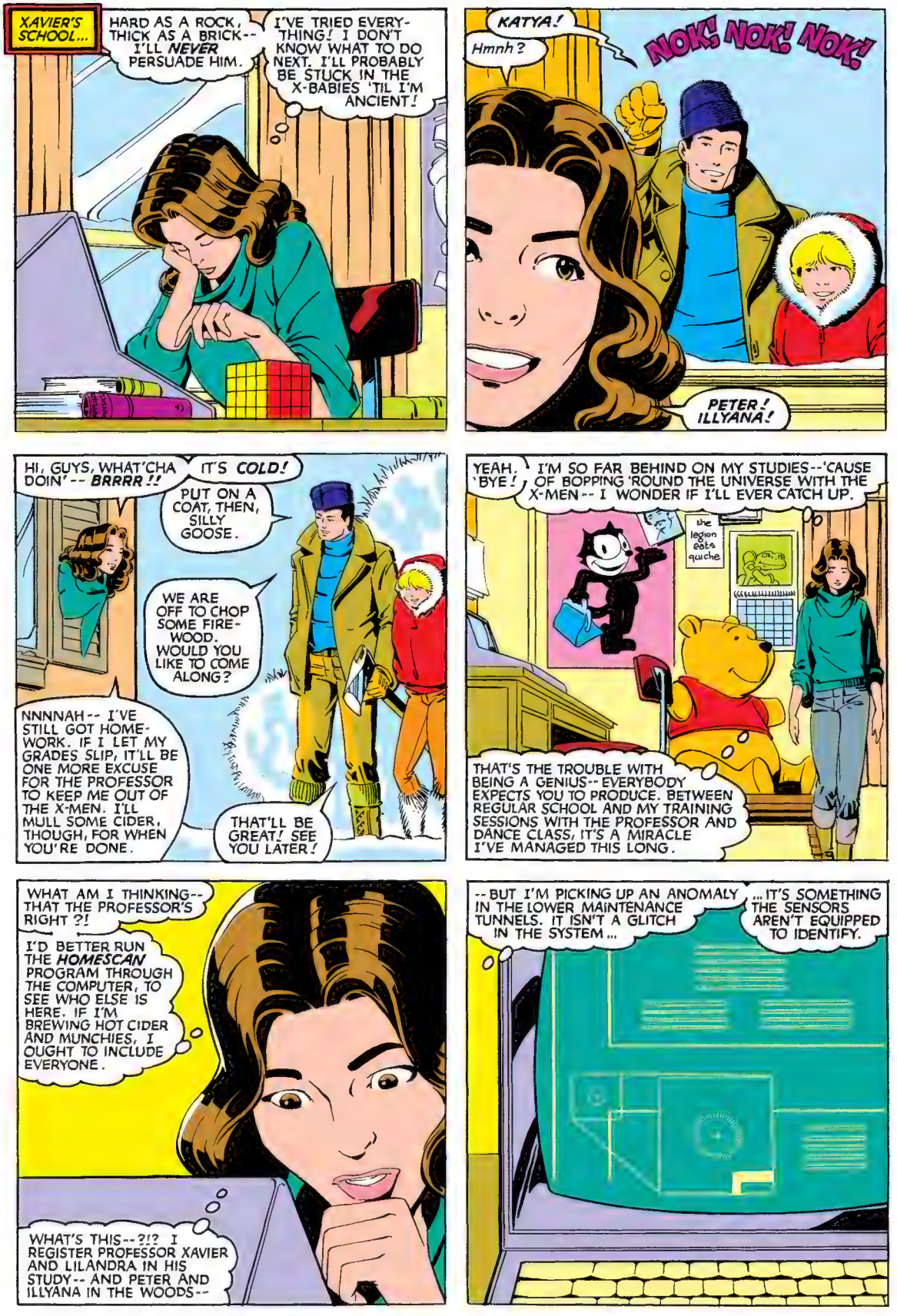
HERE YA GO, BOSS.
ABOUT BLASTED TIME.
HEY! YOU AREN'T PAOLO!


'FRAID NOT.
MERRY CHRISTMAS, LEE.

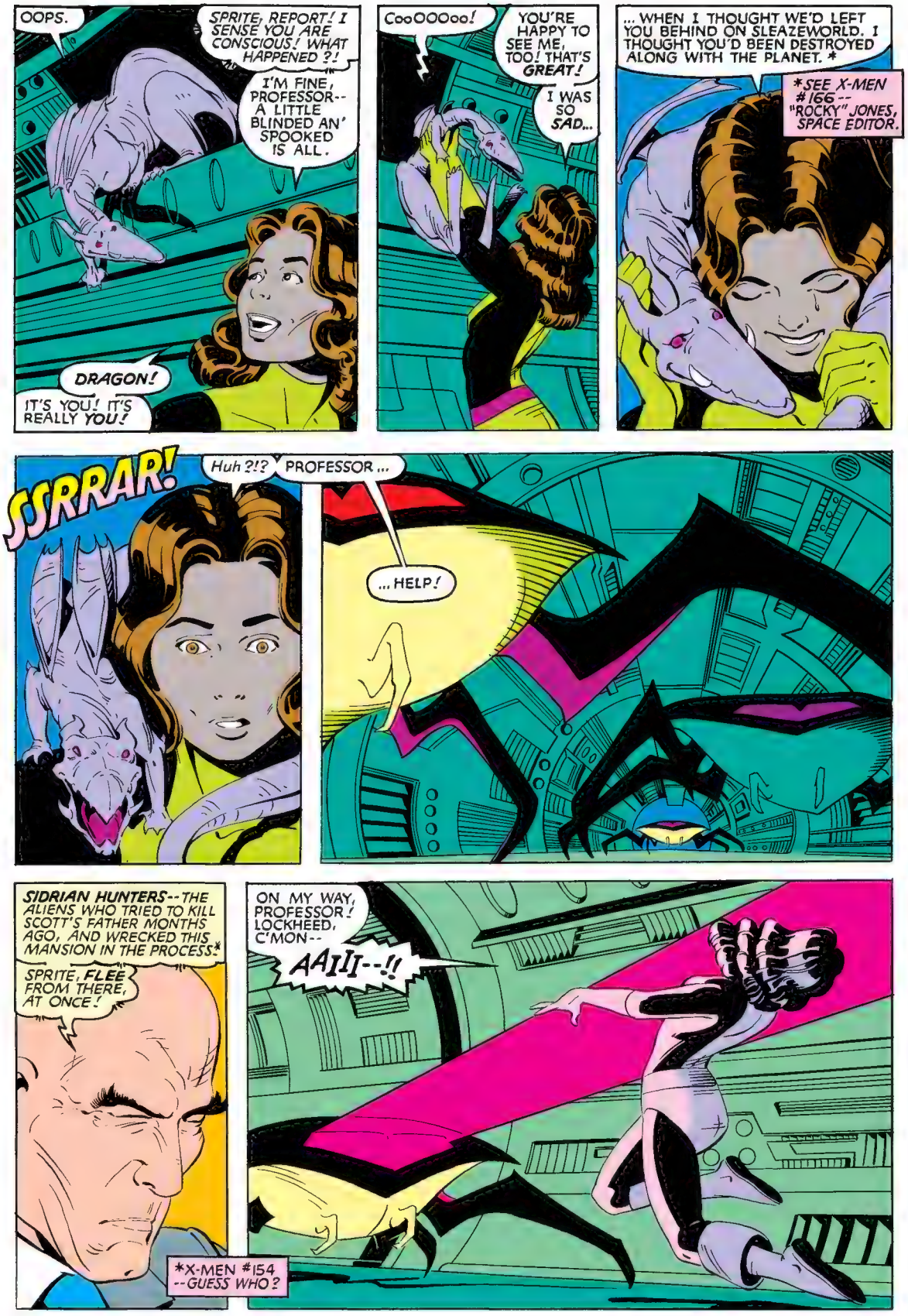

SCOTT!!


OVER A LEISURELY DINNER, SCOTT TELLS LEE OF HIS RECENT ADVENTURES WITH THE X-MEN. SHE'S IMPRESSED--AND TERRIFIED. SHE'S FACED GREAT WHITE SHARKS AND KILLER HURRICANES WITHOUT FLINCHING-- BUT SCOTT'S TALE IS SO FAR BEYOND HER EXPERIENCE, SHE DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO COPE WITH IT.
SINCE WE RETURNED TO EARTH, MY DAD DISCOVERED HIS FOLKS WERE STILL ALIVE. EVER SINCE I WAS A KID, I THOUGHT I WAS AN ORPHAN, AND NOW, OUT OF THE BLUE, I'VE GOT A FATHER AND GRANDPARENTS! A REAL FAMILY!
THEY LIVE IN ALASKA. DAD'S GOING TO TAKE ME AND MY BROTHER ALEX NORTH TO MEET THEM.
I HOPE THEY LIKE ME.
WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE?
WILL YOU BE COMING BACK?
I'D LIKE TO.
FOR A VISIT, OR TO STAY?
I... DON'T KNOW. YOU LOOK DIFFERENT.
I LET MY HAIR GROW. DON'T CHANGE THE SUBJECT.
IT'S NICE. SO ARE YOU.
"NICE?" NICE.
WHY ARE YOU ANGRY, LEE? IS IT SOMETHING I SAID, OR DID?
NO. YES. YOU WALKED INTO MY LIFE, SCOTT. THINGS HAVE BEEN CRAZY EVER SINCE.
LEE, I WON'T-- I CAN'T-- LIE TO YOU, OR MAKE A COMMITMENT I'M NOT CERTAIN I CAN KEEP. I CARE TOO MUCH FOR YOU.
I'M SORRY. THE LAST THING I WANTED TO DO WAS HURT YOU. I'LL GO.
TAKE ONE STEP, BUSTER, AND I'LL DECK YOU.
YOUR WORLD TERRIFIES ME, SCOTT. I COULD NEVER BE A PART OF IT. EVEN, I THINK, IF THAT MEANT LOSING YOU. SO SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE, I GUESS YOU'VE GOT A CHOICE: THE X-MEN OR ME. BUT UNTIL THEN...
...WE HAVE EACH OTHER. AND, FOR A WHILE, WE CAN BE HAPPY.


CENTRAL PARK SOUTH, NEW YORK CITY--
--A VERY RITZY HIGH-RISE...
...ONE OF WHOSE TENANTS IS SENIOR FLIGHT ATTENDANT AMANDA SEFTON...
...FINALLY HOME AFTER A GRUELING MONTH ON HER AIRLINE FLAGSHIP'S 'ROUND-THE-WORLD RUN.
-?!?-
THE PLACE IS LIT BY CANDLES! IT'S LOVELY--
--EXCEPT THAT MY ROOMMATES ARE ON DUTY, FLYING OUT OF THE COUNTRY. NO ONE'S SUPPOSED TO BE HERE!
HIYA, TOOTS!
YOU!?!
I KNOW YOU HAVE MY "BAMF" DOLL TO KEEP YOU COMPANY AND PROTECT YOU, BUT I THOUGHT-- THIS BEING CHRISTMAS AND ALL--YOU MIGHT, FOR A CHANGE...
...PREFER THE REAL THING.
YUM!

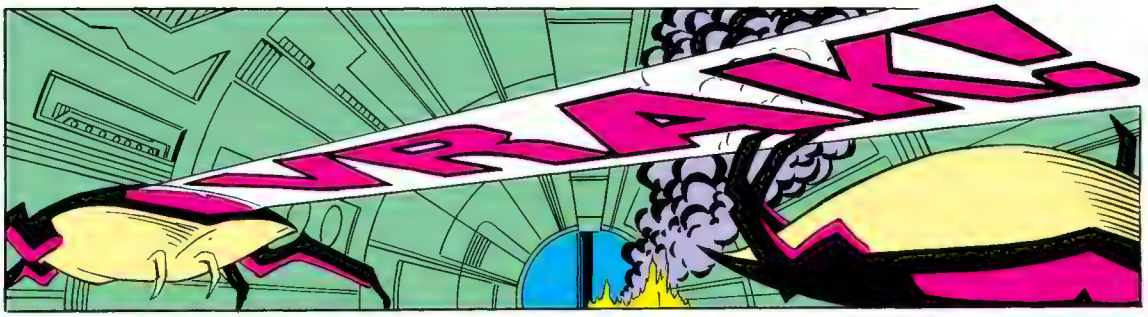

XAVIER'S SCHOOL...
HARD AS A ROCK, THICK AS A BRICK-- I'LL NEVER PERSUADE HIM.
I'VE TRIED EVERY-THING! I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO NEXT. I'LL PROBABLY BE STUCK IN THE X-BABIES 'TIL I'M ANCIENT!
KATYA!
Hmnh?
NOK! NOK! NOK!
PETER! ILLYANA!
HI, GUYS, WHAT'CHA DOIN'-- BRRRR!!
IT'S COLD!
PUT ON A COAT, THEN, SILLY GOOSE.
WE ARE OFF TO CHOP SOME FIRE-WOOD. WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME ALONG?
NNNNAH-- I'VE STILL GOT HOME-WORK. IF I LET MY GRADES SLIP, IT'LL BE ONE MORE EXCUSE FOR THE PROFESSOR TO KEEP ME OUT OF THE X-MEN. I'LL MULL SOME CIDER, THOUGH, FOR WHEN YOU'RE DONE.
THAT'LL BE GREAT! SEE YOU LATER!
YEAH. 'BYE!
I'M SO FAR BEHIND ON MY STUDIES--'CAUSE OF BOPPING 'ROUND THE UNIVERSE WITH THE X-MEN-- I WONDER IF I'LL EVER CATCH UP.
the legion of eats quiche
THAT'S THE TROUBLE WITH BEING A GENIUS-- EVERYBODY EXPECTS YOU TO PRODUCE. BETWEEN REGULAR SCHOOL AND MY TRAINING SESSIONS WITH THE PROFESSOR AND DANCE CLASS, IT'S A MIRACLE I'VE MANAGED THIS LONG.
WHAT AM I THINKING-- THAT THE PROFESSOR'S RIGHT?!
I'D BETTER RUN THE HOMESCAN PROGRAM THROUGH THE COMPUTER, TO SEE WHO ELSE IS HERE. IF I'M BREWING HOT CIDER AND MUNCHIES, I OUGHT TO INCLUDE EVERYONE.
WHAT'S THIS--?!? I REGISTER PROFESSOR XAVIER AND LILANDRA IN HIS STUDY-- AND PETER AND ILLYANA IN THE WOODS--
-- BUT I'M PICKING UP AN ANOMALY IN THE LOWER MAINTENANCE TUNNELS. IT ISN'T A GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM...
...IT'S SOMETHING THE SENSORS AREN'T EQUIPPED TO IDENTIFY.

I'LL CHECK IT OUT MYSELF. IT'S PROBABLY NOTHING, BUT I COULD USE THE BREAK. I SHOULD BE FINISHED IN PLENTY OF TIME TO FIX THE CIDER.
I HAVEN'T WORN THIS COSTUME IN AGES, SINCE I FIRST ENTERED THE SCHOOL. I WAS SO PROUD OF IT THEN. BUT IT ISN'T MY OWN SPECIAL OUTFIT ANYMORE.
IT'S THE X-BABIES' UNIFORM, AND I'M JUST PART OF A CROWD.
USING HER PHASING POWER TO SLIP THE ATOMS OF HER OWN BODY THROUGH THE SPACES BETWEEN THE ATOMS OF ALL THE OBJECTS AROUND HER, KITTY DESCENDS FROM HER ROOM TO THE MAINTENANCE TUNNEL, BURIED FAR BENEATH THE MANSION.
NO LIGHTS!
BUT I USED MY TERMINAL TO ORDER THE MAIN COMPUTER TO TURN 'EM ON. ONLY THE EMERGENCY BEACONS ARE WORKING.
AHA! HERE'S THE REASON WHY... SOMETHING'S RIPPED UP THE MAIN CABLE.
THIS ISN'T CASUAL, INDISCRIMINATE DAMAGE, EITHER.
PROFESSOR XAVIER, CAN YOU HEAR MY THOUGHTS? I'M IN TUNNEL THREE-BRAVO. WE MAY HAVE A PROBLEM.
I COMPREHEND, SPRITE. I'M MIND-SCANNING THE AREA, BUT YOU ARE THE ONLY ENTITY I CAN PERCEIVE.
I SUGGEST YOU RETURN HERE WHILE I SUMMON COLOSSUS. IT COULD BE DANGEROUS.
IF YOU CAN'T SPOT ANYONE, SIR, WHAT'S TO BE AFRAID OF? I'LL PUSH ON A BIT. THIS COULD BE A FALSE ALARM. RATS COULD HAVE CHEWED THROUGH THE CABLE.
I HATE RATS.
PROFESSOR, STAY WITH ME...
BE CAREFUL, CHILD...
...I HEAR SOMETHING.
GOTCHA-- YyIiII!!
KITTY!!


OOPS.
SPRITE, REPORT! I SENSE YOU ARE CONSCIOUS! WHAT HAPPENED ?!
I'M FINE, PROFESSOR-- A LITTLE BLINDED AN' SPOOKED IS ALL.
DRAGON!
IT'S YOU! IT'S REALLY YOU!
Cooooooo!
YOU'RE HAPPY TO SEE ME, TOO! THAT'S GREAT!
I WAS SO SAD...
...WHEN I THOUGHT WE'D LEFT YOU BEHIND ON SLEAZEWORLD. I THOUGHT YOU'D BEEN DESTROYED ALONG WITH THE PLANET. *
*SEE X-MEN #166 -- "ROCKY" JONES, SPACE EDITOR.
SSRRAR!
Huh ?!?
PROFESSOR...
...HELP!
SIDRIAN HUNTERS--THE ALIENS WHO TRIED TO KILL SCOTT'S FATHER MONTHS AGO, AND WRECKED THIS MANSION IN THE PROCESS!*
SPRITE, FLEE FROM THERE, AT ONCE!
*X-MEN #154 --GUESS WHO?
ON MY WAY, PROFESSOR! LOCKHEED, C'MON--
AAIII--!!

UGH-- THAT SHOT FRAZZLED MY NERVES, LIKE I'D PLUGGED MYSELF INTO A LIGHT SOCKET, ONLY WORSE. BUT I SEEM TO BE OKAY.
I BETTER NOT PUSH MY LUCK. THE NEXT ZAP MIGHT NOT BE SO GENTLE.
WHERE'S THE DRAGON?! DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, LITTLE FELLA-- YOU RUN AWAY AND HIDE!
THUD!
OWW!!
I CAN'T PHASE. THAT BEAM SCREWED UP MY POWER-- I'M STUCK HERE!
WELL, WOLVERINE, YOU SPENT HOURS 'N' HOURS TEACHING ME HOW TO FIGHT.
ROAR!
HERE'S WHERE THAT TRAINING PAYS OFF.
I HOPE.
DRAGON! ARE YOU GONNA HELP ME OUT?! OBOY!

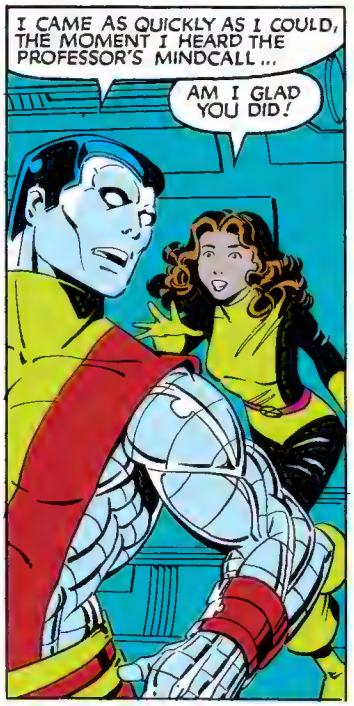
WITH IMPOSSIBLE EASE, THE DRAGON SLIPS AROUND THE SIDRI ENERGY BEAMS...
...AND RESPONDS IN KIND.
SPRITE, THESE ARE IMMATURE HUNTERS-- HATCHLINGS-- A NEST MUST HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED DURING THEIR INITIAL ATTACK.
THE CREATURES ARE VULNERABLE TO INTENSE HEAT.
LOCKHEED'S ALREADY FIGURED THAT OUT, SIR.
WHO'S LOCKHEED?
MY DRAGON.
YOUR-- WHAT?!?
I'LL EXPLAIN LATER.
THAT'S TWO. THE ODDS ARE IMPROVING.
SUDDENLY...
WHUNNEFF!
WHAM!
Ohhhhh... THAT... WAS NOT... FUN.
NO SIGN OF LOCKHEED. DID THIS LAST SIDRI ZAP HIM, TOO?
I'M OUT IN THE OPEN. I STILL CAN'T PHASE AND I'VE NOWHERE TO RUN. THE CREEP'S KEEPING HIS DISTANCE -- I MUST HAVE SCARED HIM.
HE'S GONNA FIRE. I WONDER IF IT'LL HURT?

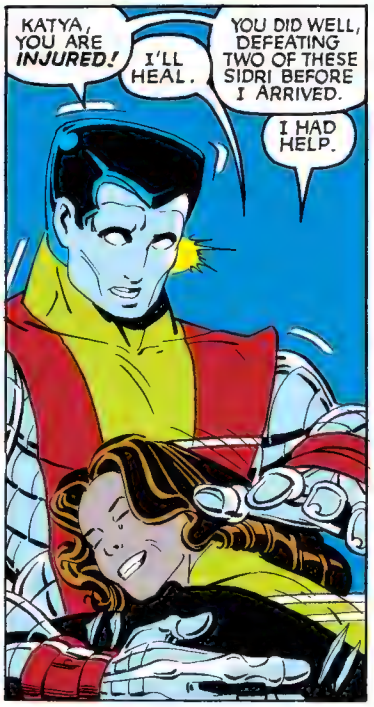

WRAK!

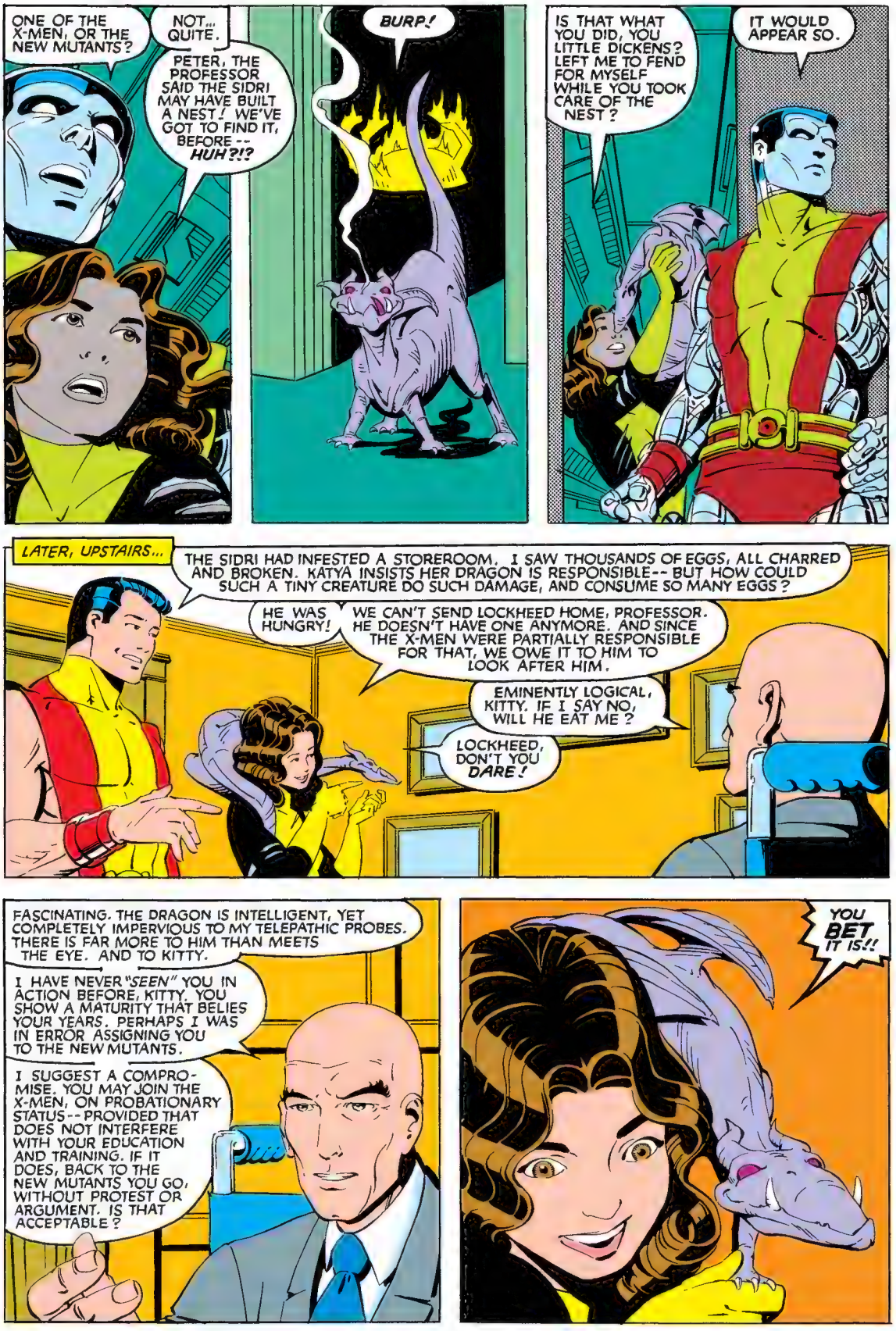
NYET!
PETER!
ZARK

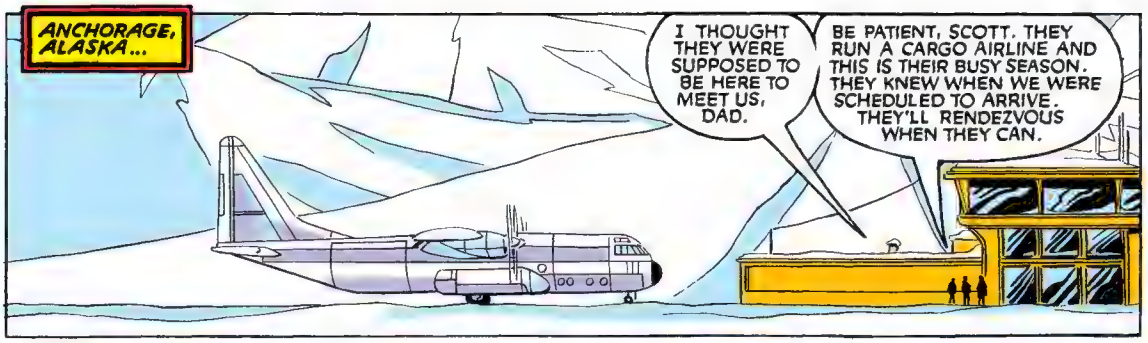
IN MY ARMORED FORM, MONSTER, I AM COMPOSED OF SOLID ORGANIC STEEL. I AM VIRTUALLY INDESTRUCTABLE.
GIVEN TIME, PERHAPS, YOU MIGHT DO ME INJURY.

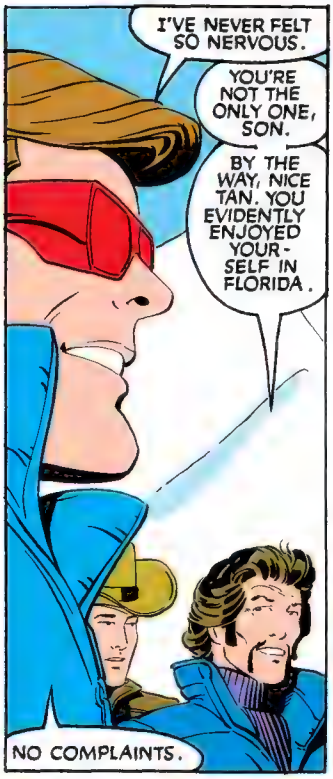
BUT SUCH TIME--
--YOU NO LONGER HAVE!


I CAME AS QUICKLY AS I COULD, THE MOMENT I HEARD THE PROFESSOR'S MINDCALL...
AM I GLAD YOU DID!


KATYA, YOU ARE INJURED!
I'LL HEAL.
YOU DID WELL, DEFEATING TWO OF THESE SIDRI BEFORE I ARRIVED.
I HAD HELP.

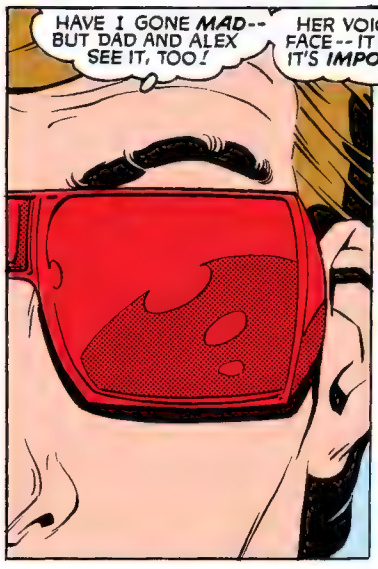

ONE OF THE X-MEN, OR THE NEW MUTANTS?
NOT... QUITE.
PETER, THE PROFESSOR SAID THE SIDRI MAY HAVE BUILT A NEST! WE'VE GOT TO FIND IT, BEFORE -- HUH?!?
BURP!
IS THAT WHAT YOU DID, YOU LITTLE DICKENS? LEFT ME TO FEND FOR MYSELF WHILE YOU TOOK CARE OF THE NEST?
IT WOULD APPEAR SO.
LATER, UPSTAIRS...
THE SIDRI HAD INFESTED A STOREROOM. I SAW THOUSANDS OF EGGS, ALL CHARRED AND BROKEN. KATYA INSISTS HER DRAGON IS RESPONSIBLE-- BUT HOW COULD SUCH A TINY CREATURE DO SUCH DAMAGE, AND CONSUME SO MANY EGGS?
HE WAS HUNGRY!
WE CAN'T SEND LOCKHEED HOME, PROFESSOR. HE DOESN'T HAVE ONE ANYMORE. AND SINCE THE X-MEN WERE PARTIALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THAT, WE OWE IT TO HIM TO LOOK AFTER HIM.
EMINENTLY LOGICAL, KITTY. IF I SAY NO, WILL HE EAT ME?
LOCKHEED, DON'T YOU DARE!
FASCINATING. THE DRAGON IS INTELLIGENT, YET COMPLETELY IMPERVIOUS TO MY TELEPATHIC PROBES. THERE IS FAR MORE TO HIM THAN MEETS THE EYE. AND TO KITTY.
I HAVE NEVER "SEEN" YOU IN ACTION BEFORE, KITTY. YOU SHOW A MATURITY THAT BELIES YOUR YEARS. PERHAPS I WAS IN ERROR ASSIGNING YOU TO THE NEW MUTANTS.
I SUGGEST A COMPROMISE. YOU MAY JOIN THE X-MEN, ON PROBATIONARY STATUS -- PROVIDED THAT DOES NOT INTERFERE WITH YOUR EDUCATION AND TRAINING. IF IT DOES, BACK TO THE NEW MUTANTS YOU GO, WITHOUT PROTEST OR ARGUMENT. IS THAT ACCEPTABLE?
YOU BET IT IS!!


ANCHORAGE, ALASKA...
I THOUGHT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO BE HERE TO MEET US, DAD.
BE PATIENT, SCOTT. THEY RUN A CARGO AIRLINE AND THIS IS THEIR BUSY SEASON. THEY KNEW WHEN WE WERE SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE. THEY'LL RENDEZVOUS WHEN THEY CAN.


I'VE NEVER FELT SO NERVOUS.
YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE, SON.
BY THE WAY, NICE TAN. YOU EVIDENTLY ENJOYED YOURSELF IN FLORIDA.
NO COMPLAINTS.

WHY, BIG BROTHER, YOU'RE BLUSHING!
LOOKING FOR A FAT LIP, ALEX?
NOT ME. YOU'RE THE FIGHTER IN THE FAMILY--I'M THE LOVER. BESIDES, WE HAVE COMPANY. A LOVELY LADY, BY THE LOOK OF HER.
Uh, POP, IS THAT OUR GRANDMOTHER?

HI! I'M HERE TO COLLECT THE SUMMERS CLAN. ARE YOU THEM?
NO! OH, NO!
I'M...
... SCOTT.
ALEX.
I'M CHRIS SUMMERS...
...THEIR FATHER.


HAVE I GONE MAD-- BUT DAD AND ALEX SEE IT, TOO!
HER VOICE--HER FACE--IT CAN'T BE! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!

WELCOME TO ALASKA.
MY NAME'S MADELYNE PRYOR.
PRYOR
NEXT ISSUE ANGEL and the UGLOIDS!

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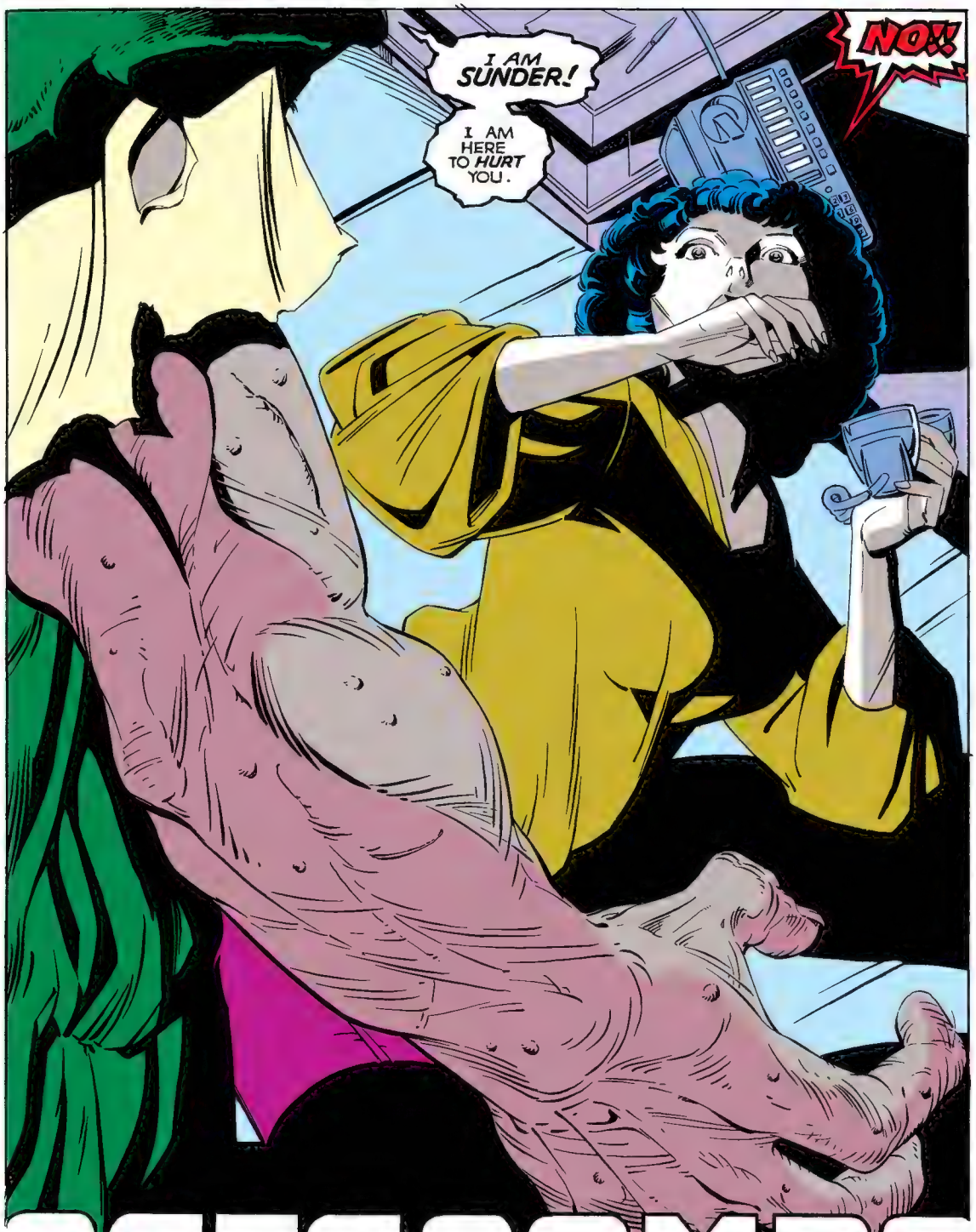
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN®
TM
IN A MOMENT, THE X-MEN WILL ARRIVE...
THEY'LL BE TOO LATE.
THIS ANGEL FALLEN

Stan Lee
PRESENTS
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN!
WARREN, I'M HOME!
SORRY IT TOOK SO LONG-- I GOT HELD UP IN TRAFFIC!
THIS WAS THE KIND OF DAY I WISH I HAD WINGS, LIKE YOU, SO I COULD SOAR ABOVE THE CROWD.
ANY CALLS OR MAIL?
WARREN?!
I'LL CHECK THE BED-ROOM.
I CALLED TO TELL HIM I WAS ON MY WAY. HE CAN'T HAVE GONE OUT.
MAYBE HE'S ASLEEP.
WHAT--?!!
YOU MOLTING, LOVER?

BLOOD!
WARREN?!?
CLICK
THE LIGHTS--!!
SOMEONE'S DOWNSTAIRS-- BUT WHO?! HOW MANY?! WHAT DO THEY WANT?!!
THEY'RE BETWEEN ME AND THE DOORS --I'M TRAPPED UP HERE! I HOPE THEY HAVEN'T CUT THE PHONES AS WELL.
BY THE TIME THE POLICE REACH ME, I COULD BE DEAD. I NEED SOMEONE BETTER.
THANK HEAVEN FOR THIS AUTOMATIC DIALER. I'VE BLANKED ON HIS NUMBER, AND MY PHONE BOOK'S IN MY PURSE.
C'MON, PROFESSOR, BE THERE! ANSWER ME! PLEASE!
FOOTSTEPS!
OF. XAVIER
NK McCOY
SEGALLE
RANAWYER
WAITE
ST CYR
McTYRE
VIRGO
72-845
CHARLES XAVIER SPEAKING.
MARVEL UNIVERSE
PROFESSOR, IT'S CANDY SOTHERN! I'M AT WARREN'S AN' MY MANHATTAN PENTHOUSE. HE'S BEEN ATTACKED!
AND I THINK IT'S ABOUT TO BECOME MY TURN-- OH!!



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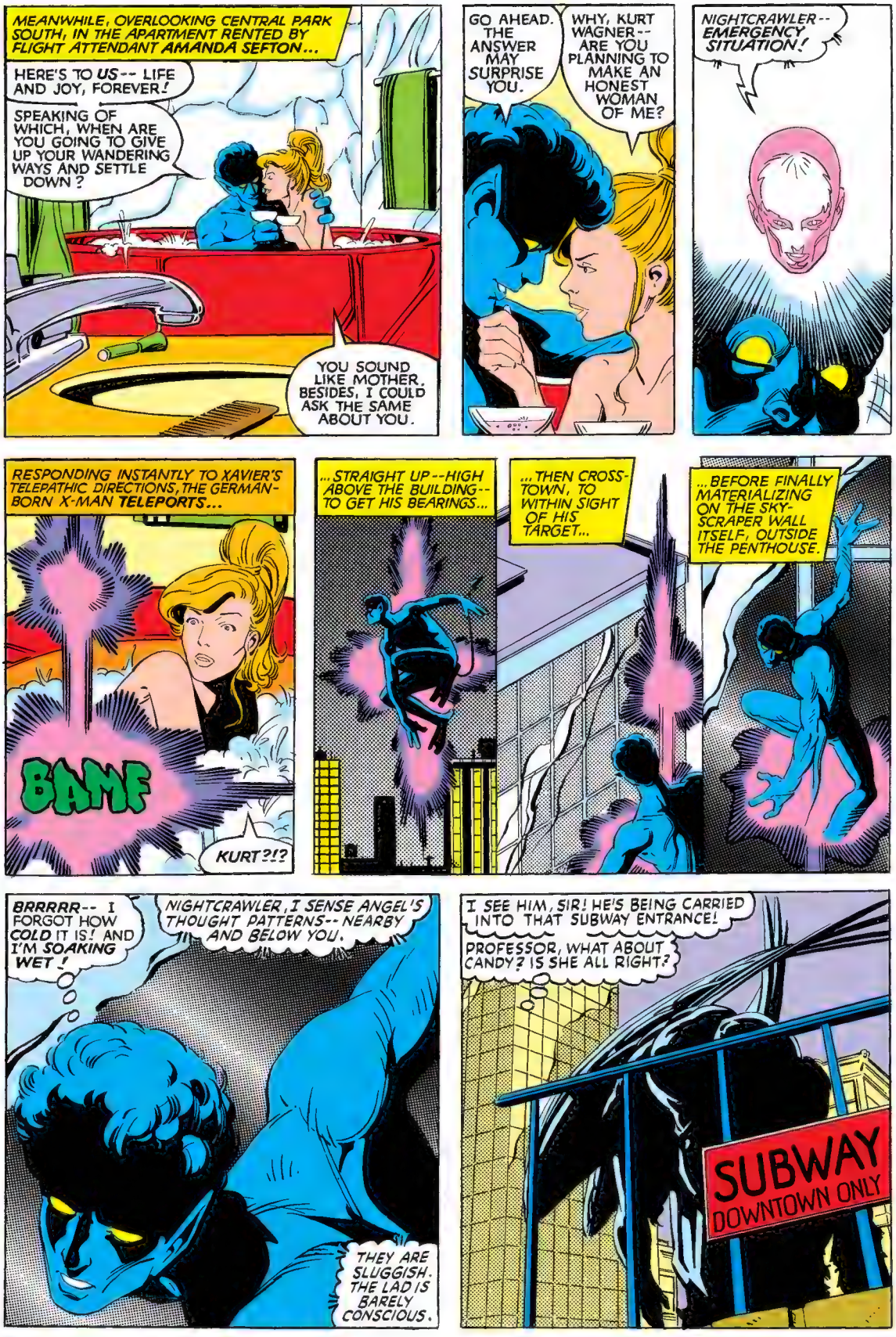
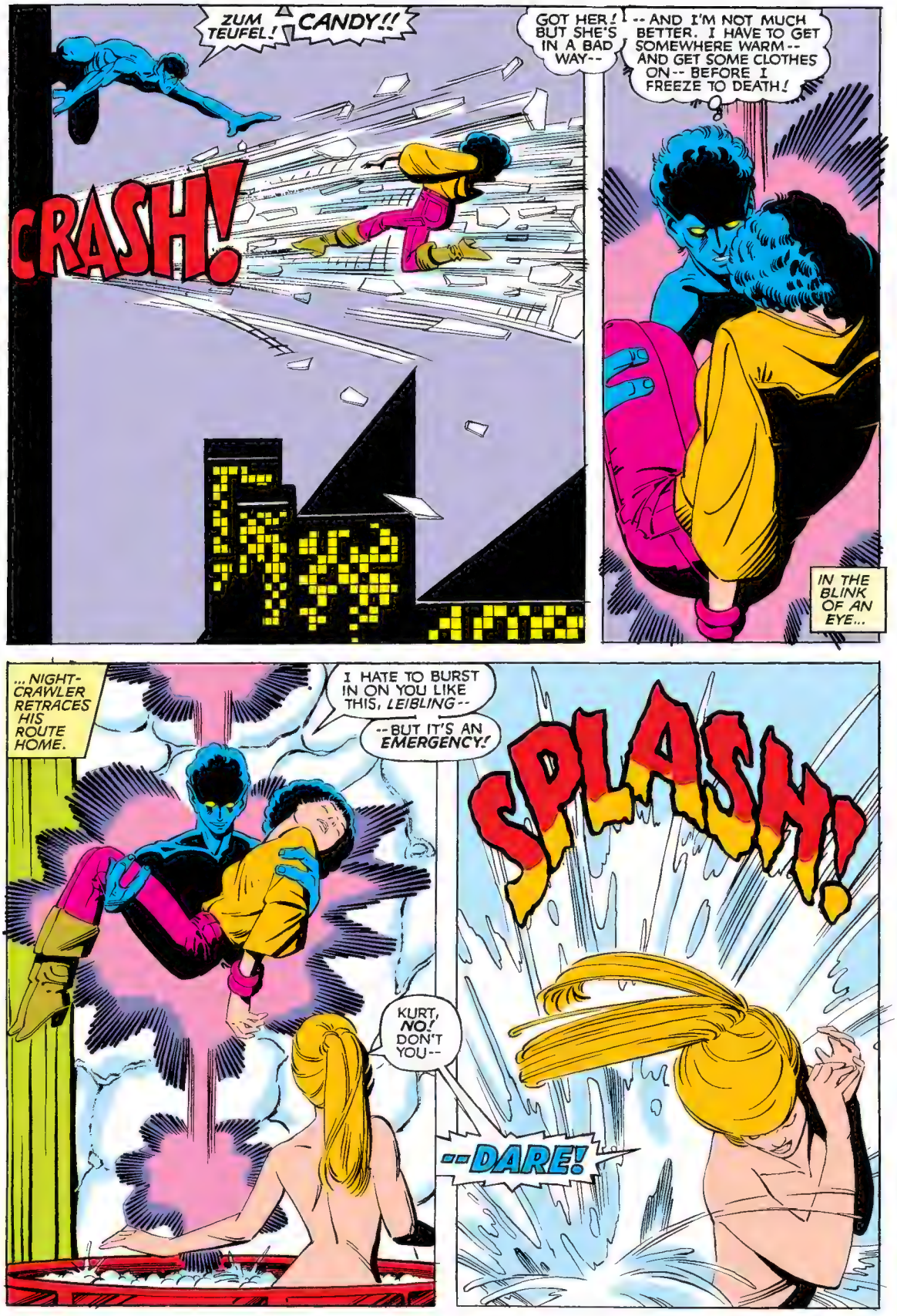
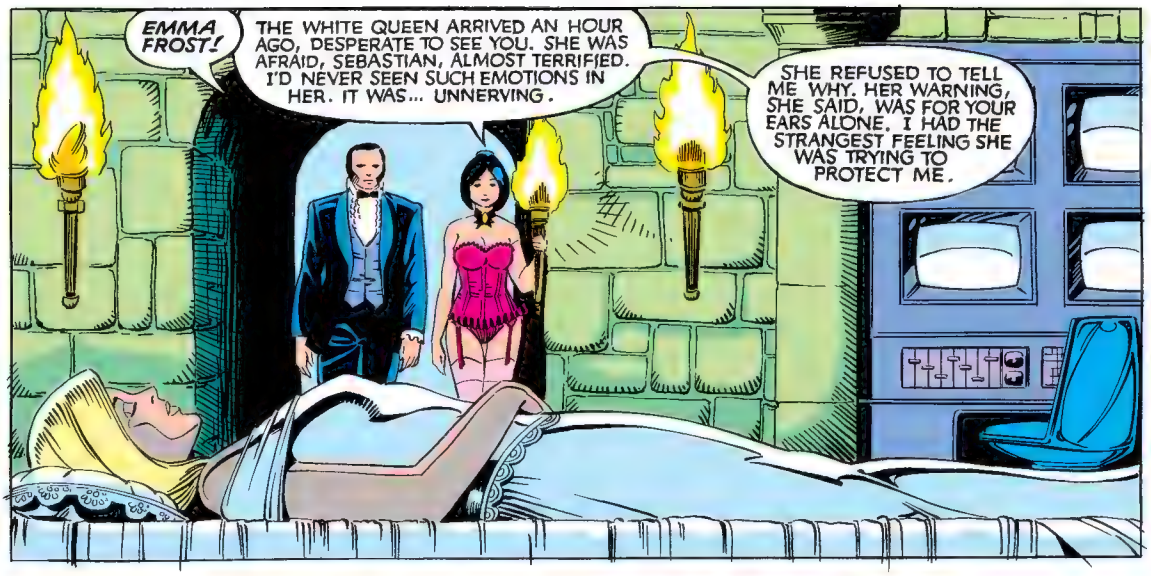
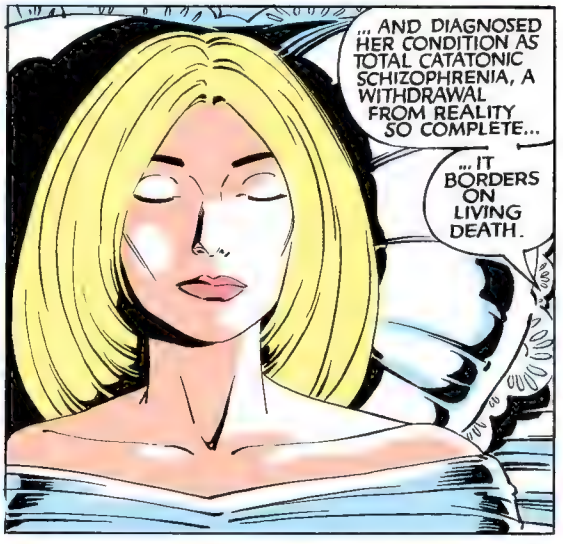

MEANWHILE, OVERLOOKING CENTRAL PARK SOUTH, IN THE APARTMENT RENTED BY FLIGHT ATTENDANT AMANDA SEFTON...
HERE'S TO US -- LIFE AND JOY, FOREVER!
SPEAKING OF WHICH, WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO GIVE UP YOUR WANDERING WAYS AND SETTLE DOWN?
YOU SOUND LIKE MOTHER. BESIDES, I COULD ASK THE SAME ABOUT YOU.
GO AHEAD. THE ANSWER MAY SURPRISE YOU.
WHY, KURT WAGNER -- ARE YOU PLANNING TO MAKE AN HONEST WOMAN OF ME?
NIGHTCRAWLER -- EMERGENCY SITUATION!
RESPONDING INSTANTLY TO XAVIER'S TELEPATHIC DIRECTIONS, THE GERMAN-BORN X-MAN TELEPORTS...
BAMF
KURT?!?
...STRAIGHT UP -- HIGH ABOVE THE BUILDING -- TO GET HIS BEARINGS...
...THEN CROSS-TOWN, TO WITHIN SIGHT OF HIS TARGET...
...BEFORE FINALLY MATERIALIZING ON THE SKY-SCRAPER WALL ITSELF, OUTSIDE THE PENTHOUSE.
BRRRRR -- I FORGOT HOW COLD IT IS! AND I'M SOAKING WET!
NIGHTCRAWLER, I SENSE ANGEL'S THOUGHT PATTERNS -- NEARBY AND BELOW YOU.
THEY ARE SLUGGISH. THE LAD IS BARELY CONSCIOUS.
I SEE HIM, SIR! HE'S BEING CARRIED INTO THAT SUBWAY ENTRANCE!
PROFESSOR, WHAT ABOUT CANDY? IS SHE ALL RIGHT?
SUBWAY
DOWNTOWN ONLY


ZUM TEUFEL!
CANDY!!
CRASH!
GOT HER! BUT SHE'S IN A BAD WAY--
-- AND I'M NOT MUCH BETTER. I HAVE TO GET SOMEWHERE WARM -- AND GET SOME CLOTHES ON -- BEFORE I FREEZE TO DEATH!
IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE...
... NIGHT-CRAWLER RETRACES HIS ROUTE HOME.
I HATE TO BURST IN ON YOU LIKE THIS, LEIBLING--
--BUT IT'S AN EMERGENCY!
KURT, NO! DON'T YOU--
SPLASH!
--DARE!

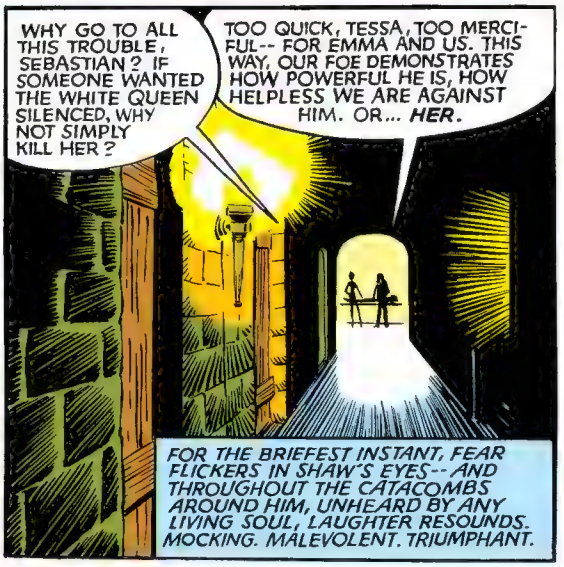
UPTOWN FRONTING CENTRAL PARK, STANDS THE HELLFIRE CLUB-- PROBABLY THE MOST EXCLUSIVE SUCH ESTABLISHMENT ON EARTH.
AMONG ITS MEMBERS IS SELF-MADE BILLIONAIRE INDUSTRIALIST SEBASTIAN SHAW.
LIKE THE X-MEN, HE IS A MUTANT, GIFTED AT BIRTH WITH EXTRAORDINARY ABILITIES THAT SET HIM FOREVER APART FROM THE REST OF HUMANITY.
UNLIKE THAT TEAM OF OUTLAW HEROES, HOWEVER, HE HAS LITTLE INTEREST IN USING THOSE POWERS FOR HIS RACE'S BENEFIT.
AS LEADER OF THE CLUB'S ULTRA-SECRET INNER CIRCLE, HIS ULTIMATE GOAL IS NOTHING LESS THAN DOMINION OVER THE ENTIRE WORLD.
HE CONSIDERS THE X-MEN THE DEADLIEST THREAT TO THAT AMBITION.
TIME AND AGAIN, HE'S TRIED TO ELIMINATE THEM. THE MOST RECENT FAILURE NEARLY COST HIS LIFE-- AN ORDEAL FROM WHICH HE'S ONLY JUST RECOVERED.
BUT SHAW IS A PATIENT MAN, WHO LEARNS FROM HIS MISTAKES. HE CAN AFFORD TO LOSE. THE X-MEN CAN'T.
AND EVENTUALLY, HE BELIEVES, THEY WILL.
YOUR SUMMONS WAS URGENT, TESSA. WHAT'S WRONG?
COME DOWN HERE, SEBASTIAN, AND SEE FOR YOURSELF.


EMMA FROST!
THE WHITE QUEEN ARRIVED AN HOUR AGO, DESPERATE TO SEE YOU. SHE WAS AFRAID, SEBASTIAN, ALMOST TERRIFIED. I'D NEVER SEEN SUCH EMOTIONS IN HER. IT WAS... UNNERVING.
SHE REFUSED TO TELL ME WHY. HER WARNING, SHE SAID, WAS FOR YOUR EARS ALONE. I HAD THE STRANGEST FEELING SHE WAS TRYING TO PROTECT ME.

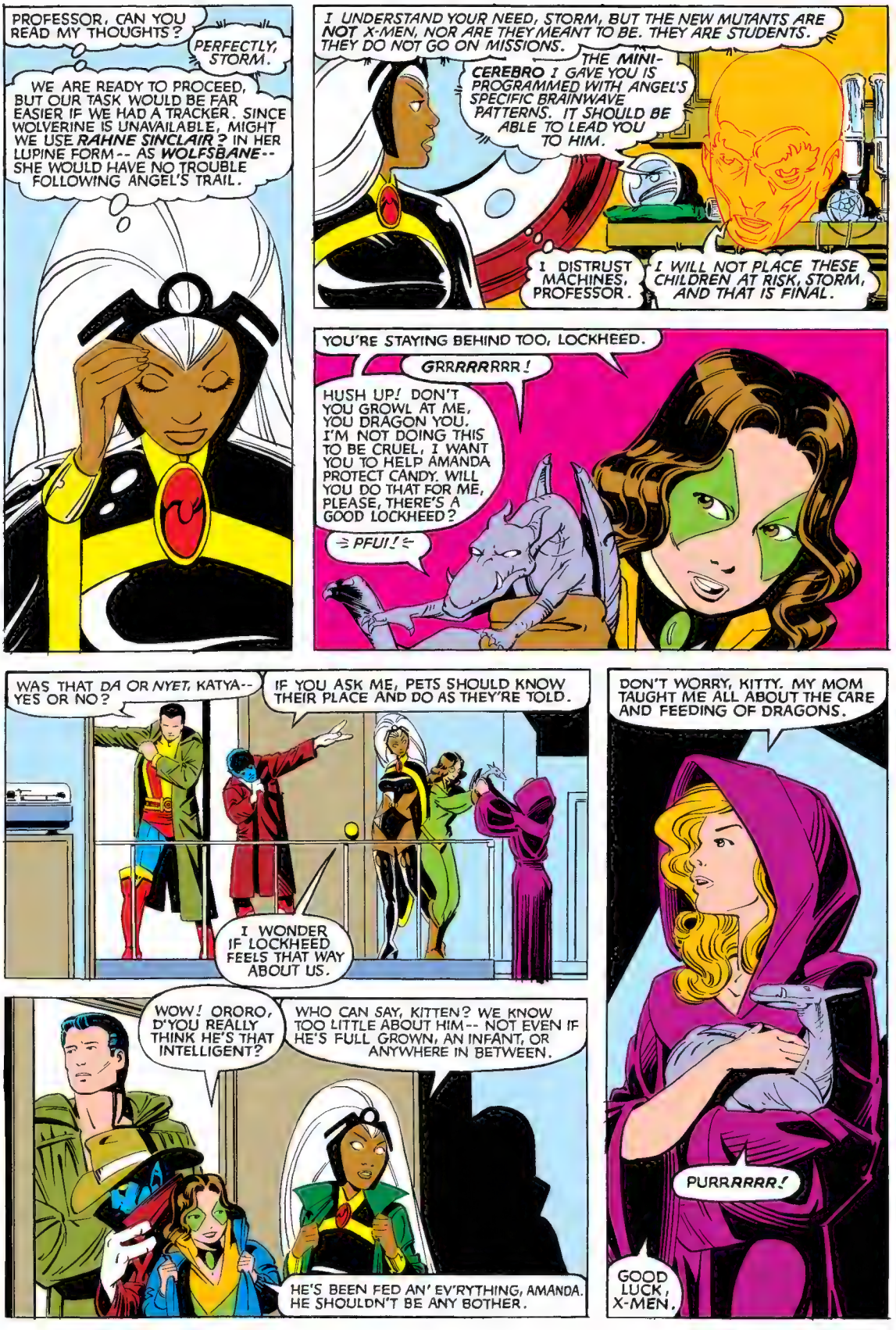
SHE'S A TELEPATH. WHY DIDN'T SHE SIMPLY ESTABLISH A MINDLINK?
PERHAPS SOME FORCE PREVENTED HER. THE SAME THAT STRUCK HER DOWN.
EXPLAIN.
IN MID-SENTENCE, SHE COLLAPSED. I'VE EXAMINED HER...

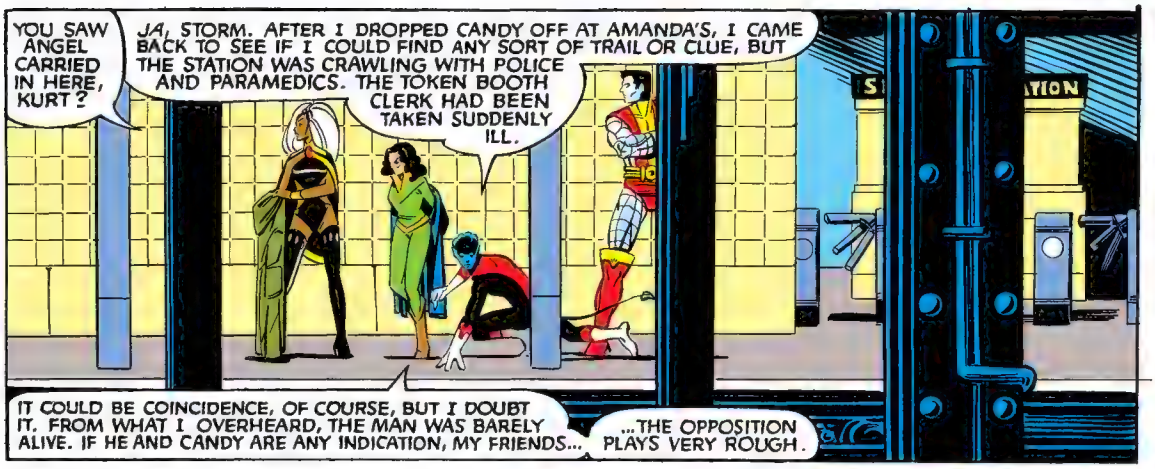

...AND DIAGNOSED HER CONDITION AS TOTAL CATATONIC SCHIZOPHRENIA, A WITHDRAWAL FROM REALITY SO COMPLETE...
...IT BORDERS ON LIVING DEATH.

HER PSIONIC DEFENSES WERE FORMIDABLE. TO OVERCOME THEM SO QUICKLY WOULD REQUIRE AN ANTAGONIST OF PHENOMINAL STRENGTH AND SKILL.
THE ONLY TELEPATH WHO FITS THAT BILL IS THE FOUNDER OF THE X-MEN: CHARLES XAVIER.
BUT I FIND THAT HARD TO BELIEVE. HE'S TOO HIGH-MINDED AND HONORABLE.


WHY GO TO ALL THIS TROUBLE, SEBASTIAN? IF SOMEONE WANTED THE WHITE QUEEN SILENCED, WHY NOT SIMPLY KILL HER?
TOO QUICK, TESSA, TOO MERCIFUL-- FOR EMMA AND US. THIS WAY, OUR FOE DEMONSTRATES HOW POWERFUL HE IS, HOW HELPLESS WE ARE AGAINST HIM. OR... HER.
FOR THE BRIEFEST INSTANT, FEAR FLICKERS IN SHAW'S EYES-- AND THROUGHOUT THE CATACOMBS AROUND HIM, UNHEARD BY ANY LIVING SOUL, LAUGHTER RESOUNDS. MOCKING. MALEVOLENT. TRIUMPHANT.

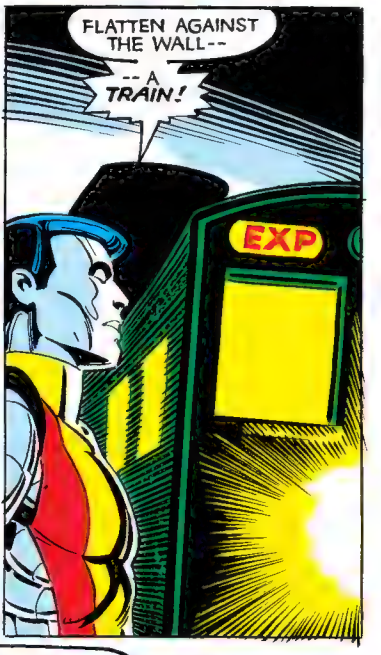
AMANDA'S APARTMENT, LATER THAT EVENING...
IN THE SAME BURST OF THOUGHTS WHICH ALERTED NIGHTCRAWLER TO CANDY'S PLIGHT, XAVIER SUMMONED THE REST OF THE X-MEN AND SENT THEM AFTER HIM. CANDY RECOVERED QUICKLY UNDER AMANDA'S MINISTRATIONS, AND WAS SOON ABLE TO RELATE WHAT LITTLE SHE KNOWS OF THE NIGHT'S EVENTS.
IT SOUNDS AWFUL, CANDY.
IT WASN'T PLEASANT, KITTY. WHEN SUNDER GRABBED ME, I THOUGHT I WAS DEAD. THE ROOM WAS SO DARK-- HIS FEATURES COVERED BY RAGS-- I'M AFRAID I NEVER GOT A DECENT LOOK AT HIM.
WELL, AT LEAST I -- hah-CHOO!-- SAW WHICH WAY THEY WENT.
YOU SOUND FAIRLY MISERABLE YOURSELF, TOVARISCH. PERHAPS YOU SHOULD BE IN BED.
NOTHING I'D LIKE BETTER, COLOSSUS. BUT WITH WOLVERINE OFF TO JAPAN-- LORD KNOWS WHY*-- WE'RE SHORT-HANDED AS IT IS. YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO LEAVE ME BEHIND.
A MUG OF-- ah-CHOO!-- ONE OF AMANDA'S MIRACLE POTIONS SHOULD PUT ME RIGHT.
* FOR AN EXPLANATION, SEE WOLVERINE #1 -- LOUISE.
THAT'S ALREADY IN THE WORKS, LOVER.
STORM, I'D LIKE TO HELP, IF YOU'LL HAVE ME.
YOUR OFFER IS APPRECIATED, AMANDA.
I WOULD RATHER YOU STAY WITH CANDY, IN CASE ANGEL'S KIDNAPPERS MAKE ANOTHER TRY AT HER.
IF THEY DO, I GUARANTEE 'EM SOME RUDE SURPRISES.

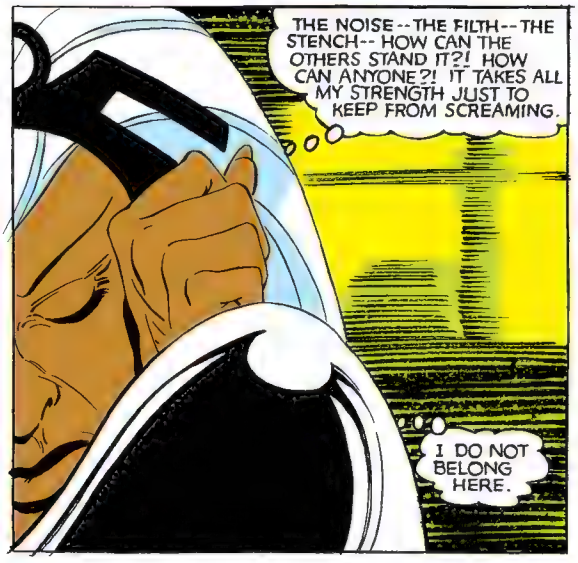

PROFESSOR, CAN YOU READ MY THOUGHTS?
PERFECTLY, STORM.
WE ARE READY TO PROCEED, BUT OUR TASK WOULD BE FAR EASIER IF WE HAD A TRACKER. SINCE WOLVERINE IS UNAVAILABLE, MIGHT WE USE RAHNE SINCLAIR? IN HER LUPINE FORM -- AS WOLFSBANE -- SHE WOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE FOLLOWING ANGEL'S TRAIL.
I UNDERSTAND YOUR NEED, STORM, BUT THE NEW MUTANTS ARE NOT X-MEN, NOR ARE THEY MEANT TO BE. THEY ARE STUDENTS. THEY DO NOT GO ON MISSIONS.
THE MINI-CEREBRO I GAVE YOU IS PROGRAMMED WITH ANGEL'S SPECIFIC BRAINWAVE PATTERNS. IT SHOULD BE ABLE TO LEAD YOU TO HIM.
I DISTRUST MACHINES, PROFESSOR.
I WILL NOT PLACE THESE CHILDREN AT RISK, STORM, AND THAT IS FINAL.
YOU'RE STAYING BEHIND TOO, LOCKHEED.
GRRRRRRR!
HUSH UP! DON'T YOU GROWL AT ME, YOU DRAGON YOU. I'M NOT DOING THIS TO BE CRUEL, I WANT YOU TO HELP AMANDA PROTECT CANDY. WILL YOU DO THAT FOR ME, PLEASE, THERE'S A GOOD LOCKHEED?
=PFUI!=
WAS THAT DA OR NYET, KATYA -- YES OR NO?
IF YOU ASK ME, PETS SHOULD KNOW THEIR PLACE AND DO AS THEY'RE TOLD.
I WONDER IF LOCKHEED FEELS THAT WAY ABOUT US.
WOW! ORORO, D'YOU REALLY THINK HE'S THAT INTELLIGENT?
WHO CAN SAY, KITTEN? WE KNOW TOO LITTLE ABOUT HIM -- NOT EVEN IF HE'S FULL GROWN, AN INFANT, OR ANYWHERE IN BETWEEN.
HE'S BEEN FED AN' EV'RYTHING, AMANDA. HE SHOULDN'T BE ANY BOTHER.
DON'T WORRY, KITTY. MY MOM TAUGHT ME ALL ABOUT THE CARE AND FEEDING OF DRAGONS.
PURRRRRR!
GOOD LUCK, X-MEN.


YOU SAW ANGEL CARRIED IN HERE, KURT?
JA, STORM. AFTER I DROPPED CANDY OFF AT AMANDA'S, I CAME BACK TO SEE IF I COULD FIND ANY SORT OF TRAIL OR CLUE, BUT THE STATION WAS CRAWLING WITH POLICE AND PARAMEDICS. THE TOKEN BOOTH CLERK HAD BEEN TAKEN SUDDENLY ILL.
IT COULD BE COINCIDENCE, OF COURSE, BUT I DOUBT IT. FROM WHAT I OVERHEARD, THE MAN WAS BARELY ALIVE. IF HE AND CANDY ARE ANY INDICATION, MY FRIENDS...
...THE OPPOSITION PLAYS VERY ROUGH.

I HAVE A CONTACT ON MY MINI-CEREBRO. WITHIN A KILOMETER LATERALLY, BUT FAR BELOW US. I DID NOT REALIZE THE CITY WENT THAT DEEP.
CAN YOU PERCEIVE ANGEL'S THOUGHTS, PROFESSOR?

I CAN HARDLY HEAR YOURS, STORM. OUR PSI-LINK HAS BEEN DETERIORATING SINCE YOU WENT UNDERGROUND. SOME FORCE IS GENERATING PSYCHIC INTERFERENCE OF A TYPE I'VE NEVER ENCOUNTERED. THUS FAR, I'VE BEEN UNABLE TO OVERCOME IT.
IF YOU CONTINUE, I FEAR I WON'T BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN CONTACT.
YOU'RE THE BOSS, ORORO. WHICH WAY?
FOR ANGEL'S SAKE...
...THE RISK MUST BE TAKEN.


FLATTEN AGAINST THE WALL--
--A TRAIN!
EXP

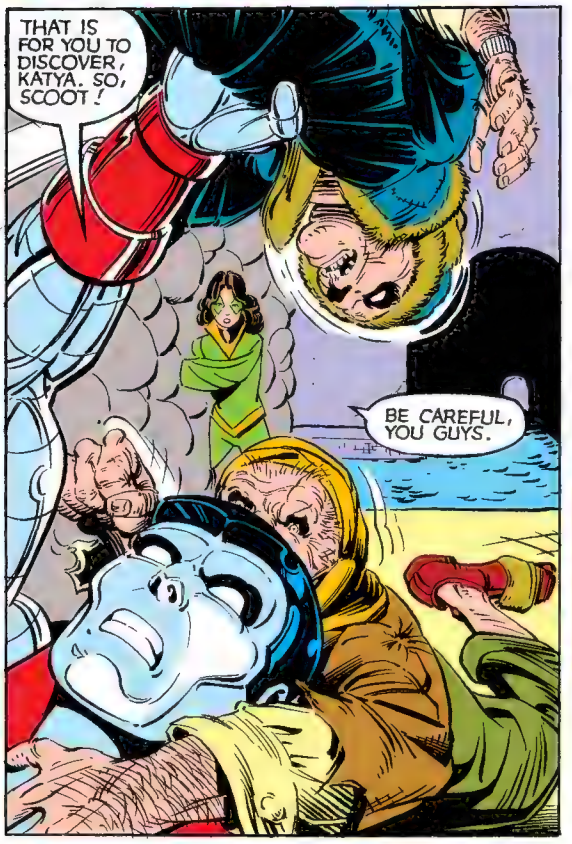

THE NOISE--THE FILTH--THE STENCH--HOW CAN THE OTHERS STAND IT?! HOW CAN ANYONE?! IT TAKES ALL MY STRENGTH JUST TO KEEP FROM SCREAMING.
I DO NOT BELONG HERE.

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, STORM? I KNOW YOUR FEAR OF ENCLOSED SPACES...
AS A CHILD, COLOSSUS, I WAS BURIED ALIVE. THAT EMOTIONAL SCAR WAS A LONG TIME HEALING. BUT REST ASSURED--EVEN IF MY CLAUSTROPHOBIA STILL EXISTS...
...IT IS NOW VERY MUCH UNDER CONTROL.
NIGHTCRAWLER, TAKE THE POINT. SEE WHAT IS UP AHEAD.

SOON...
Hmmm--THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT ANGEL'S TRAIL LEADS OFF TO THE RIGHT...
...THROUGH A SOLID WALL?
PERHAPS NOT QUITE SO SOLID AS IT APPEARS. KITTY, PHASE THROUGH AND SEE WHAT'S THERE.
I'D ASK YOU TO CALL ME BY MY CODE-NAME, STORM, IF I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS SO DUMB.
YOU USED TO LIKE "SPRITE"--aha, AS I SUSPECTED, A DOOR.
SPRITE'S A KID'S NAME. I'M AN X-MAN.
THERE ARE STEPS HERE, TOO. BE CAREFUL, THOUGH, THEY'RE STEEP AND COVERED IN GUNK.
THIS PLACE GIVES ME THE CREEPS.
ME, ALSO.
DO PEOPLE ACTUALLY LIVE HERE???
DERELICTS, OUTCASTS--PEOPLE WITH NO PLACE ELSE TO GO. PEOPLE WHO DO NOT WANT TO BE FOUND.
ORORO SOUNDS SO SAD--AND BITTER--LIKE SHE'S SPEAKING FROM A MEMORY SHE HATES.
OH, YES, LITTLE BROTHER, SUCH AS THEY NOT ONLY LIVE IN A CITY'S LOWER DEPTHS...
...THEY THRIVE.
INTRUDERS!
GET THEM!!

COLOSSUS, THE STAIR RAILING IS COLLAPSING!
DO NOT WORRY, STORM. MY ARMORED BODY CAN EASILY SURVIVE THE FALL.
IT IS A STRAIN USING MY ELEMENTAL POWERS UNDERGROUND...
BAMF

... BUT AT LEAST THIS GALLERY IS LARGE ENOUGH FOR ME TO GENERATE SUFFICIENT WIND TO FLY.
KITTY, SCOUT THE AREA. I NEED TO KNOW PRECISELY WHAT WE ARE UP AGAINST.
BOP!
STORM, D'YOU THINK THESE STREET PEOPLE ARE THE ONES WHO KIDNAPPED ANGEL? IF THEY ARE, WHY'D THEY DO IT?

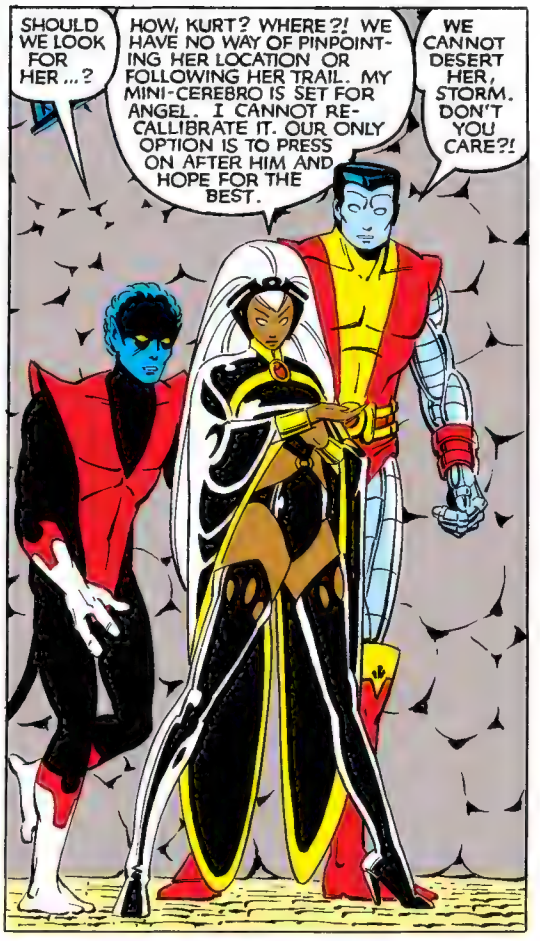

THAT IS FOR YOU TO DISCOVER, KATYA. SO, SCOOT!
BE CAREFUL, YOU GUYS.

YOUR CONCERN IS ADMIRABLE, LITTLE ONE, BUT MIS-PLACED.
AS A HUMAN BEING, **PETER RASPUTIN** POSSESSES PHENOMENAL STRENGTH-- BUT WHEN HE TRANSFORMS HIMSELF TO ORGANIC STEEL...
...HE BECOMES WELL-NIGH IRRESISTIBLE AND UNSTOPPABLE...

...A FACT WHICH DOES NOT GO UNNOTICED BY HIDDEN, HOSTILE EYES.
SHOULD WE BE FIGHTING THEM, CAL? THEY'RE MUTANTS, LIKE US.
NOT LIKE US, SUNDER! THEY PRETTY! HATE 'EM. WANT TO HURT 'EM!
BE PATIENT, MASQUE, YOU'LL GET YOUR CHANCE. FOR THE MOMENT, WE WAIT AND WATCH--TO LEARN WHAT THEIR POWERS ARE AND HOW THEY USE 'EM.
WE'LL LURE OUR GUESTS DEEPER--INTO THE ALLEY--THEN WE'LL NAIL 'EM.
PAYDIRT! WOW--FROM CANDY'S DESCRIPTION, THAT BIG CREEP HAS TO BE SUNDER. HE'S HUGE!
WHY AREN'T THEY JOINING THE FIGHT? ARE THEY PLANNING A TRAP?! I'LL EDGE CLOSER--TO HEAR ALL I CAN--BEFORE WARNING STORM.
A SCENT--
--GIRL, YOUNG, CLEAN--
--OUTSIDER!
UH-OH! I'VE BEEN SPOTTED--BUT HOW?!
PLAGUE--SHE'S YOURS!
I DON'T KNOW IF THESE PEOPLE CAN HURT ME, BUT WITH NAMES LIKE THEIRS, I DON'T WANNA FIND OUT!
MY ARM--I WAS PHASING, BUT IT TINGLED WHEN THAT OLD LADY PASSED THROUGH ME--WHAT DID SHE DO TO IT?!!
I CAN'T TOUCH HER! THE GIRL'S A GHOST!
THAT WALL WON'T KEEP US FROM HER.
STAND ASIDE, PLAGUE!
SHUNK

AND WHAT WILL YOU DO IF YOU CATCH HER, O GRAND AND GLORIOUS LUMMOX?
IF SHE CAN WALK THROUGH WALLS, YOUR FISTS WON'T DO HER MUCH DAMAGE.
LET HER RUN, SHE WON'T GET FAR.
IF A SINGLE MOLECULE OF THE DISEASE PLAGUE MANIFESTED REMAINS ON THE GIRL'S PERSON WHEN SHE SOLIDIFIES...
...SHE'S AS GOOD AS DEAD.
MEANWHILE...
PLEASANT DREAMS, MEIN HERREN.
ANYBODY NEED ASSISTANCE? I'M AVAILABLE.
THANKS FOR THE OFFER, NIGHTCRAWLER, BUT I HAVE THE SITUATION WELL IN HAND.

THE ASSAULT BROKE OFF AS SUDDENLY AS IT BEGAN. DO YOU THINK WE FRIGHTENED THEM AWAY?
THEY TOOK THEIR UNCONSCIOUS BRETHREN WITH THEM, SO WE WOULD HAVE NO ONE TO QUESTION. NOT A GOOD SIGN.
I THINK THIS WAS A PROBE, TO TEST OUR STRENGTH.
STORM, WHERE IS SPRITE? SHOULD SHE NOT HAVE RETURNED BY THIS TIME?


SHOULD WE LOOK FOR HER...?
HOW, KURT? WHERE?! WE HAVE NO WAY OF PINPOINTING HER LOCATION OR FOLLOWING HER TRAIL. MY MINI-CEREBRO IS SET FOR ANGEL. I CANNOT RECALLIBRATE IT. OUR ONLY OPTION IS TO PRESS ON AFTER HIM AND HOPE FOR THE BEST.
WE CANNOT DESERT HER, STORM. DON'T YOU CARE?!

YOU DARE ASK THAT OF ME, COLOSSUS?! I LOVE KITTY AS I WOULD MY OWN DAUGHTER. I SENT HER ON THAT RECONNAISSANCE. IF SHE IS LOST, THE BLAME IS MINE.
BUT SO LONG AS I AM IN CHARGE -- SO LONG AS YOUR LIVES ARE MY RESPONSIBILITY -- I MUST THINK OF THE WHOLE, NOT THE ONE...
...WHATEVER THE COST.

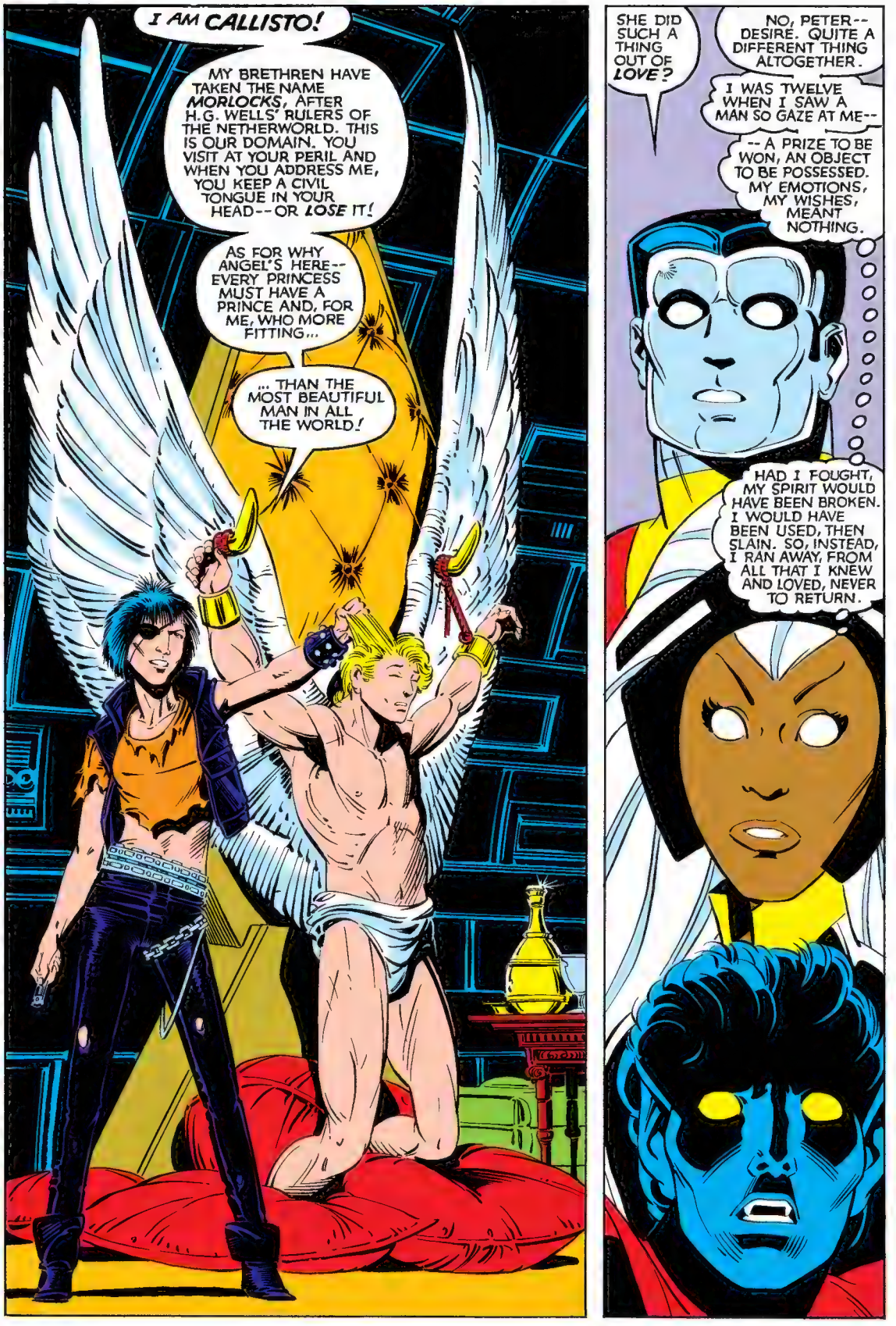
SHE DIDN'T ANSWER PETER'S QUESTION. AND HER MANNER IS SO COLD AND DISTANT -- I'VE NEVER SEEN HER LIKE THIS. IMPOSSIBLE AS IT SOUNDS, COULD HE BE RIGHT?
STORM, WE'RE BADLY OUTNUMBERED. MIGHT REENFORCEMENTS NOT BE ADVISABLE?

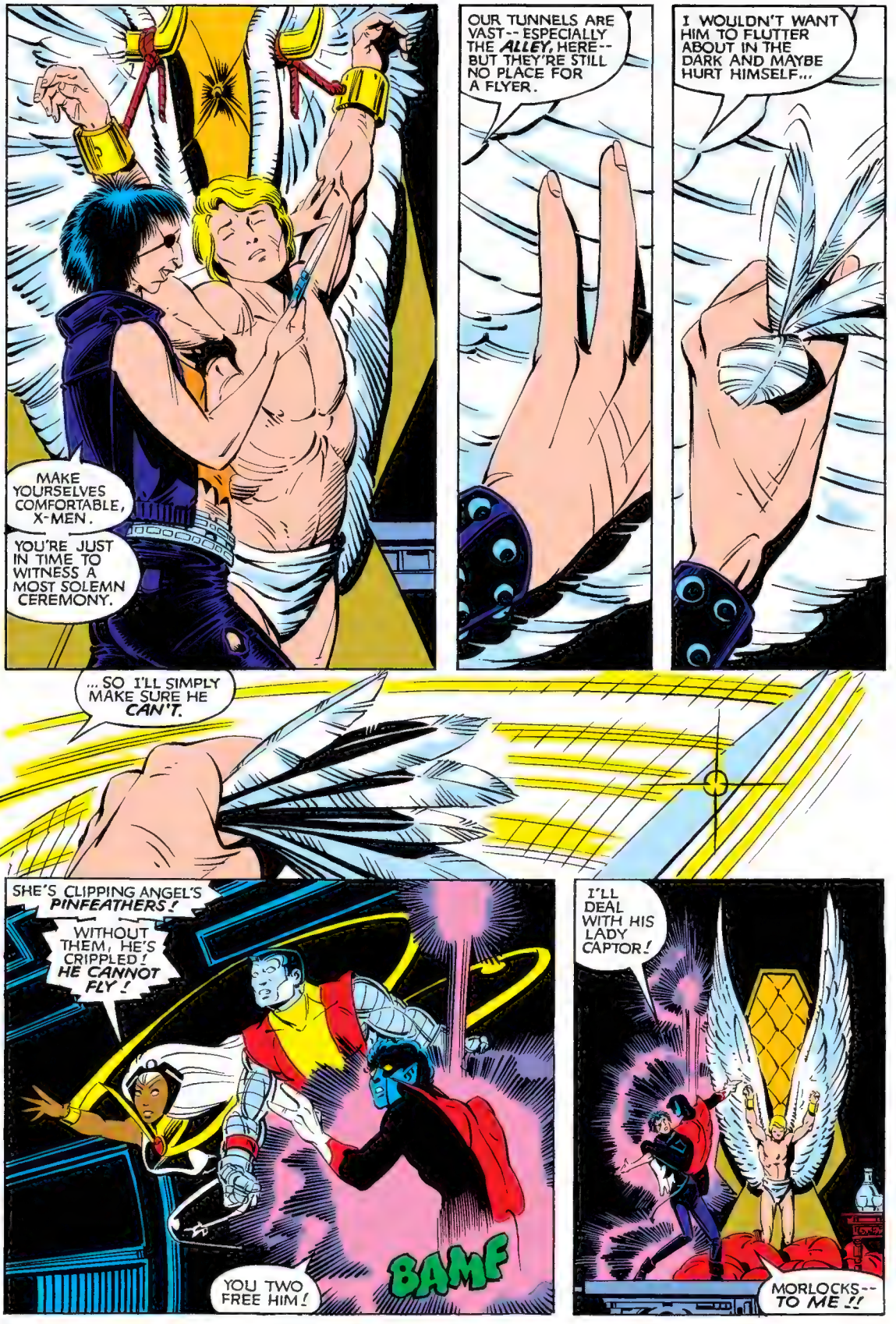
HOW DO WE SUMMON THEM? OUR PSIONIC AND RADIO LINKS WITH PROFESSOR XAVIER ARE BEING JAMMED. AND IF WE RETREAT TO THE SURFACE -- ASSUMING THAT IS EVEN POSSIBLE --
--WHAT THEN HAPPENS TO OUR FRIENDS?

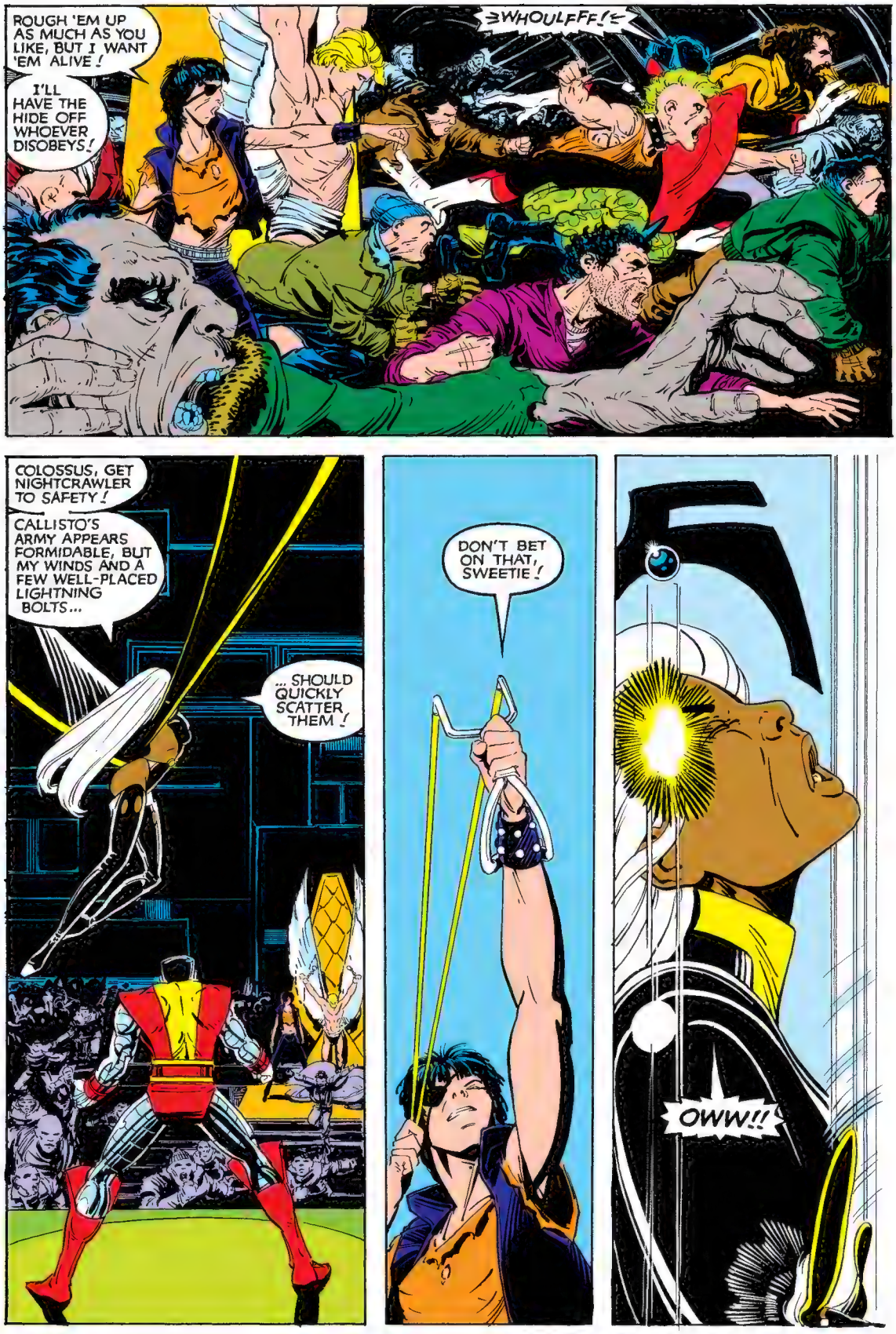
FINALLY, KURT, WHO DO WE SUMMON? X-MEN ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN...
SO WE'RE ON OUR OWN.
AS ALWAYS.

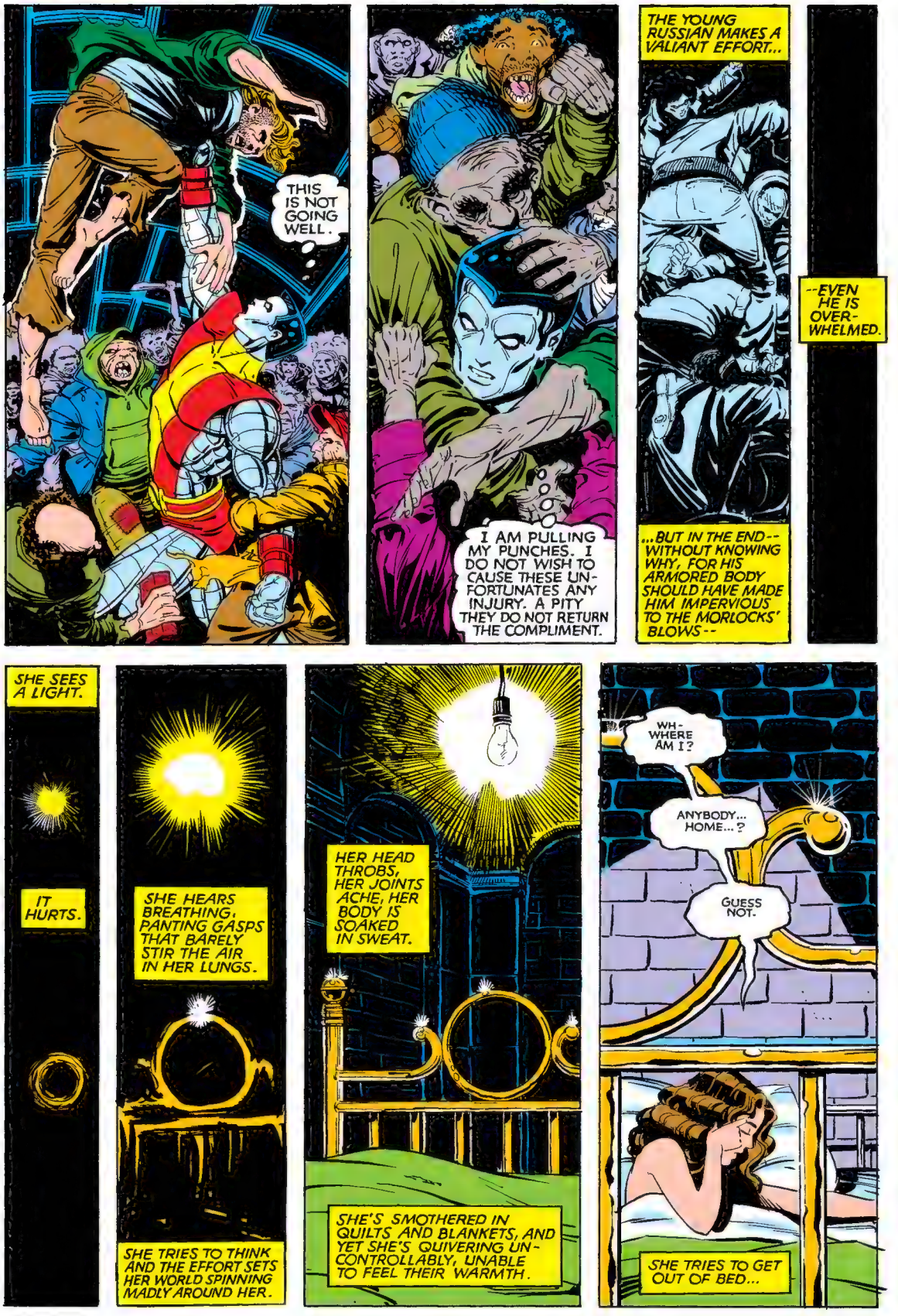
HOWEVER, AS THE X-MEN PRESS ON...
GUYS...
... I'M AFRAID...
... I DON'T FEEL SO GOOD...
SPRITE-CHILD!
CALIBAN SENSED STRANGERS IN HIS HOME. IT GLADDENED HIS HEART TO RECOGNIZE ONE AMONG THEM AS HIS BELOVED KITTYPRYDE.
BUT--HER LIFEFLAME BURNS SO LOW--AN ILLNESS CONSUMES HER! THIS IS PLAGUE'S DOING!
CALIBAN HAD THOUGHT NEVER TO SEE THE SPRITE-CHILD AGAIN. HE WILL NOT FIND HER ONLY TO LOSE HER. HE WILL CARE FOR HER, HEAL HER. SHE WILL COME TO SEE HOW MUCH HE LOVES HER.
THEN, SHE WILL LOVE HIM, TOO. AND THEY WILL LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

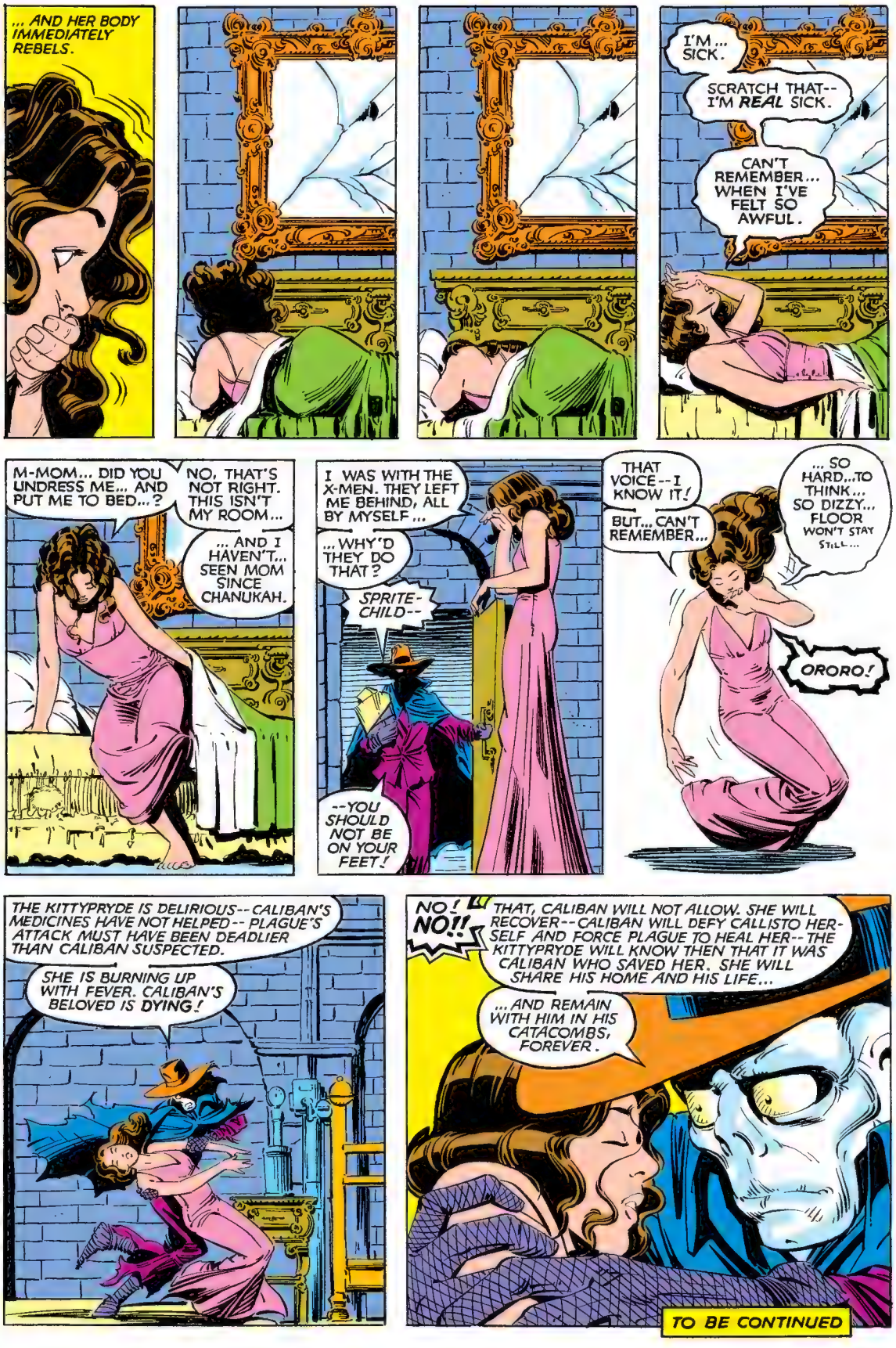
ELSEWHERE...
BY THE WHITE WOLF!
A TUNNEL!
MAGNIFICENT! WE MUST BE OVER A THOUSAND FEET BENEATH THE CITY, AND ALTHOUGH EVERYTHING ABOUT US REEKS OF AGE...
...IT IS SO WELL-MAINTAINED THAT IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN CONSTRUCTED ONLY YESTERDAY. I WONDER HOW FAR IT REACHES.
SUDDENLY...
MAKE NO MOVE, INTRUDERS, OR BE STRUCK DOWN WHERE YOU STAND!
A WOMAN'S VOICE! STORM, THOSE LIGHTS--SO BLINDING-- I CANNOT SEE!
THAT'S THE IDEA, MEIN FREUND.
ANY ORDERS, STORM?
STAY LOOSE, BOTH OF YOU. WE SHALL LET OUR HOSTS MAKE THE NEXT MOVE.
I AM STORM, LEADER OF THE X-MEN. WE COME IN PEACE, SEEKING A FRIEND.
YOU MEAN ANGEL?
THEN, YOU'RE IN LUCK. HERE HE IS!
THAT RAILROAD CAR-- WE WERE SO DAZZLED BY THE LIGHTS AND BOOMING LOUDSPEAKERS, WE DID NOT NOTICE ITS APPROACH!
YOU-- WITCH! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HIM?!!


I AM CALLISTO!
MY BRETHREN HAVE TAKEN THE NAME MORLOCKS, AFTER H.G. WELLS' RULERS OF THE NETHERWORLD. THIS IS OUR DOMAIN. YOU VISIT AT YOUR PERIL AND WHEN YOU ADDRESS ME, YOU KEEP A CIVIL TONGUE IN YOUR HEAD--OR LOSE IT!
AS FOR WHY ANGEL'S HERE--EVERY PRINCESS MUST HAVE A PRINCE AND, FOR ME, WHO MORE FITTING...
... THAN THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MAN IN ALL THE WORLD!
SHE DID SUCH A THING OUT OF LOVE?
NO, PETER--DESIRE. QUITE A DIFFERENT THING ALTOGETHER.
I WAS TWELVE WHEN I SAW A MAN SO GAZE AT ME--
-- A PRIZE TO BE WON, AN OBJECT TO BE POSSESSED. MY EMOTIONS, MY WISHES, MEANT NOTHING.
HAD I FOUGHT, MY SPIRIT WOULD HAVE BEEN BROKEN. I WOULD HAVE BEEN USED, THEN SLAIN. SO, INSTEAD, I RAN AWAY, FROM ALL THAT I KNEW AND LOVED, NEVER TO RETURN.


MAKE YOURSELVES COMFORTABLE, X-MEN.
YOU'RE JUST IN TIME TO WITNESS A MOST SOLEMN CEREMONY.
OUR TUNNELS ARE VAST-- ESPECIALLY THE ALLEY, HERE-- BUT THEY'RE STILL NO PLACE FOR A FLYER.
I WOULDN'T WANT HIM TO FLUTTER ABOUT IN THE DARK AND MAYBE HURT HIMSELF...
... SO I'LL SIMPLY MAKE SURE HE CAN'T.
SHE'S CLIPPING ANGEL'S PINFEATHERS!
WITHOUT THEM, HE'S CRIPPLED! HE CANNOT FLY!
YOU TWO FREE HIM!
BAMF
I'LL DEAL WITH HIS LADY CAPTOR!
MORLOCKS-- TO ME!!


ROUGH 'EM UP AS MUCH AS YOU LIKE, BUT I WANT 'EM ALIVE!
I'LL HAVE THE HIDE OFF WHOEVER DISOBEYS!
WHOOUFFF!
COLOSSUS, GET NIGHTCRAWLER TO SAFETY!
CALLISTO'S ARMY APPEARS FORMIDABLE, BUT MY WINDS AND A FEW WELL-PLACED LIGHTNING BOLTS...
... SHOULD QUICKLY SCATTER THEM!
DON'T BET ON THAT, SWEETIE!
OWW!!


THIS IS NOT GOING WELL.
I AM PULLING MY PUNCHES. I DO NOT WISH TO CAUSE THESE UNFORTUNATES ANY INJURY. A PITY THEY DO NOT RETURN THE COMPLIMENT.
THE YOUNG RUSSIAN MAKES A VALIANT EFFORT...
...BUT IN THE END--WITHOUT KNOWING WHY, FOR HIS ARMORED BODY SHOULD HAVE MADE HIM IMPERVIOUS TO THE MORLOCKS' BLOWS--
--EVEN HE IS OVERWHELMED.
SHE SEES A LIGHT.
IT HURTS.
SHE HEARS BREATHING, PANTING GASPS THAT BARELY STIR THE AIR IN HER LUNGS.
SHE TRIES TO THINK AND THE EFFORT SETS HER WORLD SPINNING MADLY AROUND HER.
HER HEAD THROBS, HER JOINTS ACHE, HER BODY IS SOAKED IN SWEAT.
SHE'S SMOTHERED IN QUILTS AND BLANKETS, AND YET SHE'S QUIVERING UNCONTROLLABLY, UNABLE TO FEEL THEIR WARMTH.
WH-WHERE AM I?
ANYBODY... HOME...?
GUESS NOT.
SHE TRIES TO GET OUT OF BED...


... AND HER BODY IMMEDIATELY REBELS.
I'M... SICK.
SCRATCH THAT-- I'M REAL SICK.
CAN'T REMEMBER... WHEN I'VE FELT SO AWFUL.
M-MOM... DID YOU UNDRESS ME... AND PUT ME TO BED...?
NO, THAT'S NOT RIGHT. THIS ISN'T MY ROOM...
... AND I HAVEN'T... SEEN MOM SINCE CHANUKAH.
I WAS WITH THE X-MEN. THEY LEFT ME BEHIND, ALL BY MYSELF...
...WHY'D THEY DO THAT?
SPRITE-CHILD--
--YOU SHOULD NOT BE ON YOUR FEET!
THAT VOICE--I KNOW IT!
BUT... CAN'T REMEMBER...
... SO HARD...TO THINK... SO DIZZY... FLOOR WON'T STAY STILL...
ORORO!
THE KITTYPRYDE IS DELIRIOUS--CALIBAN'S MEDICINES HAVE NOT HELPED--PLAGUE'S ATTACK MUST HAVE BEEN DEADLIER THAN CALIBAN SUSPECTED.
SHE IS BURNING UP WITH FEVER. CALIBAN'S BELOVED IS DYING!
NO! NO!!
THAT, CALIBAN WILL NOT ALLOW. SHE WILL RECOVER--CALIBAN WILL DEFY CALLISTO HERSELF AND FORCE PLAGUE TO HEAL HER--THE KITTYPRYDE WILL KNOW THEN THAT IT WAS CALIBAN WHO SAVED HER. SHE WILL SHARE HIS HOME AND HIS LIFE...
...AND REMAIN WITH HIM IN HIS CATACOMBS, FOREVER.
TO BE CONTINUED

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THE UNCANNY
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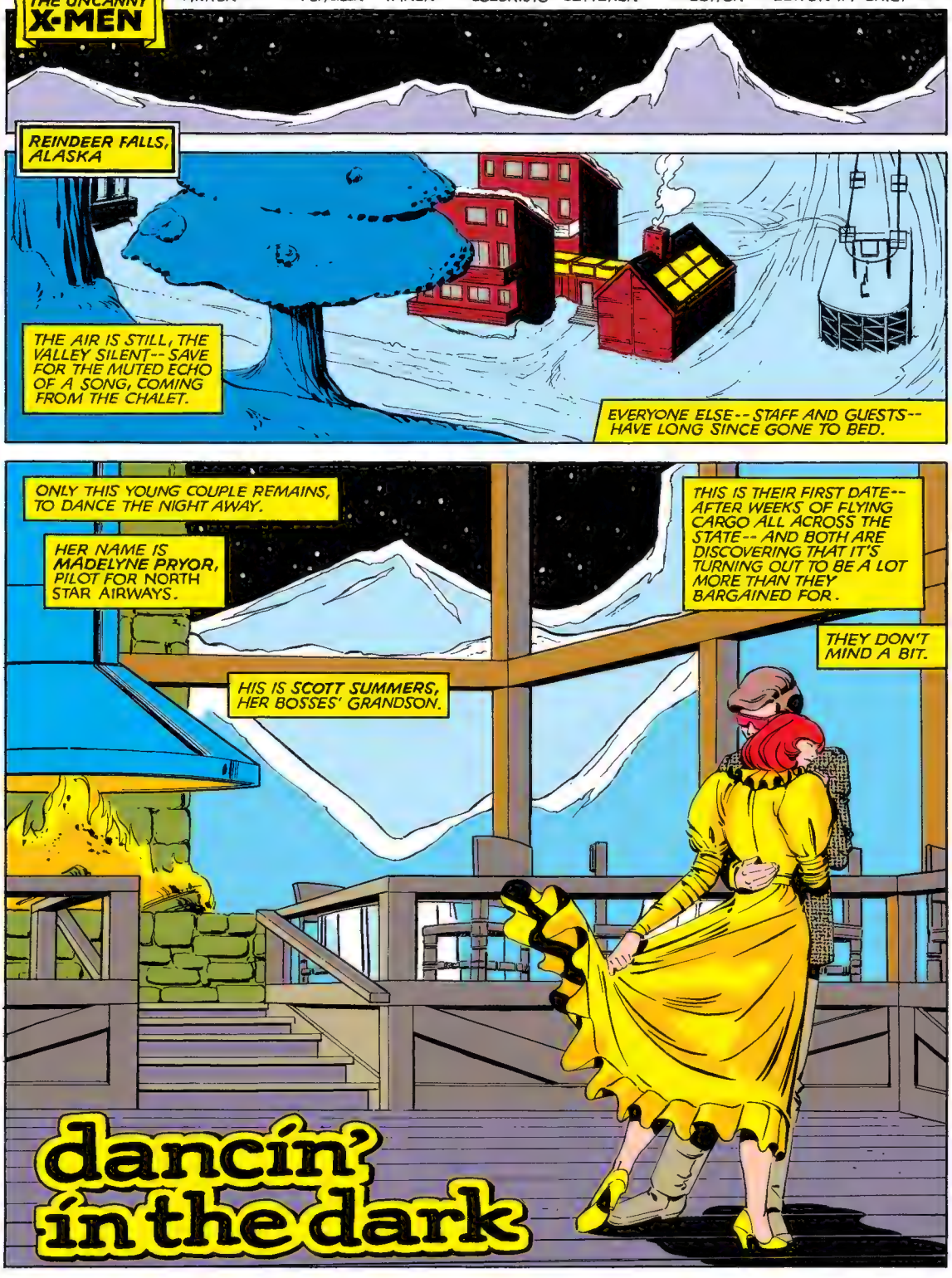
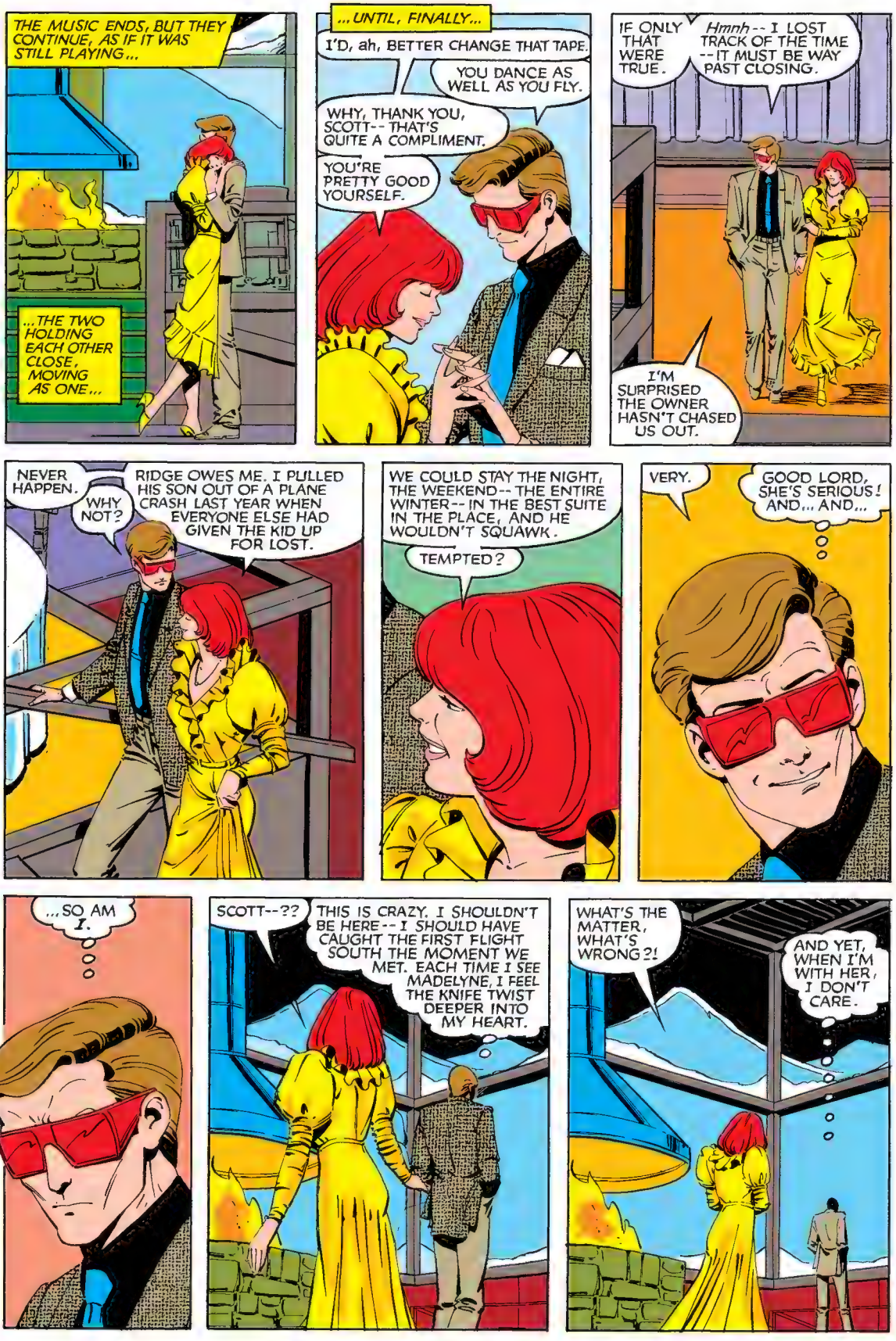
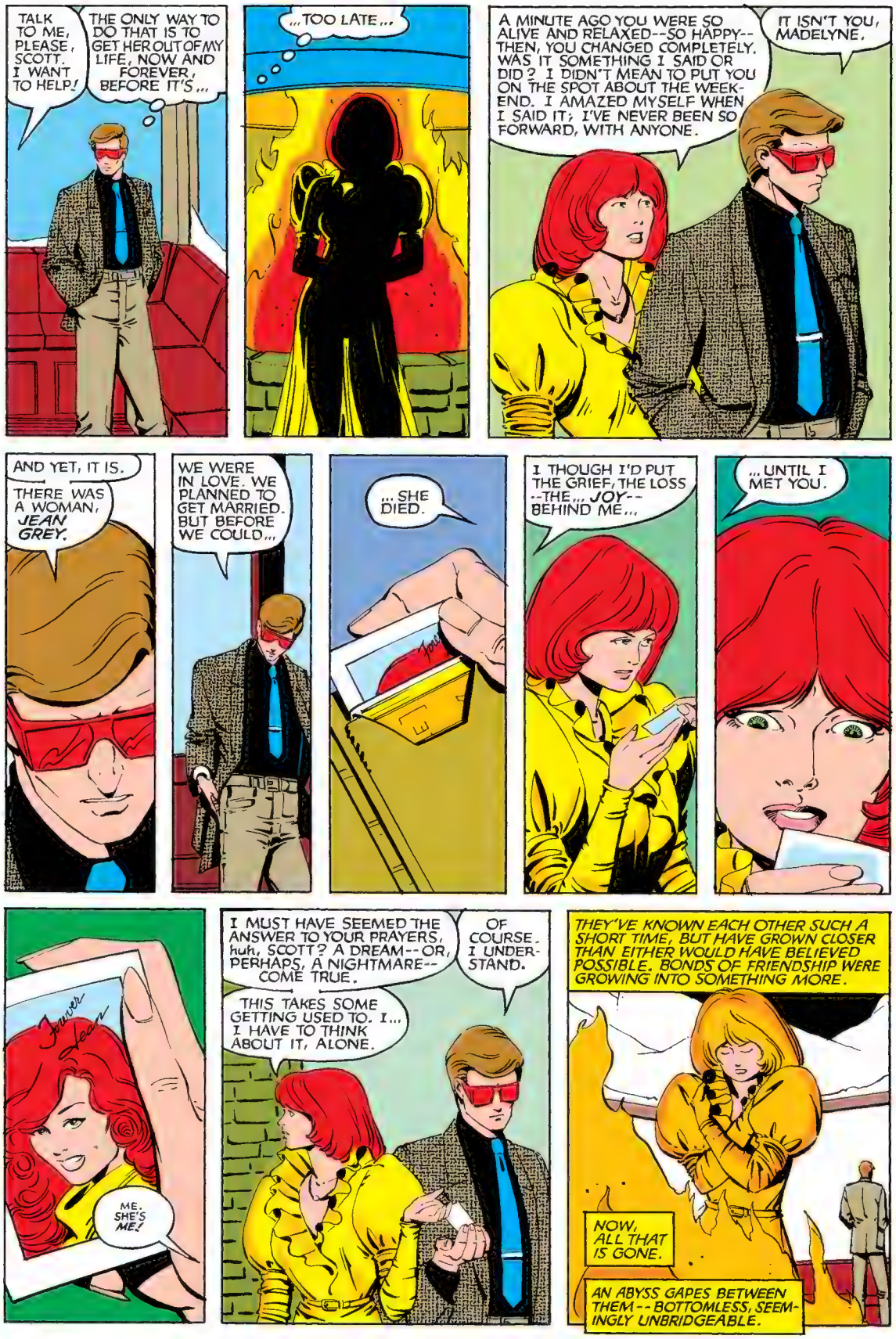
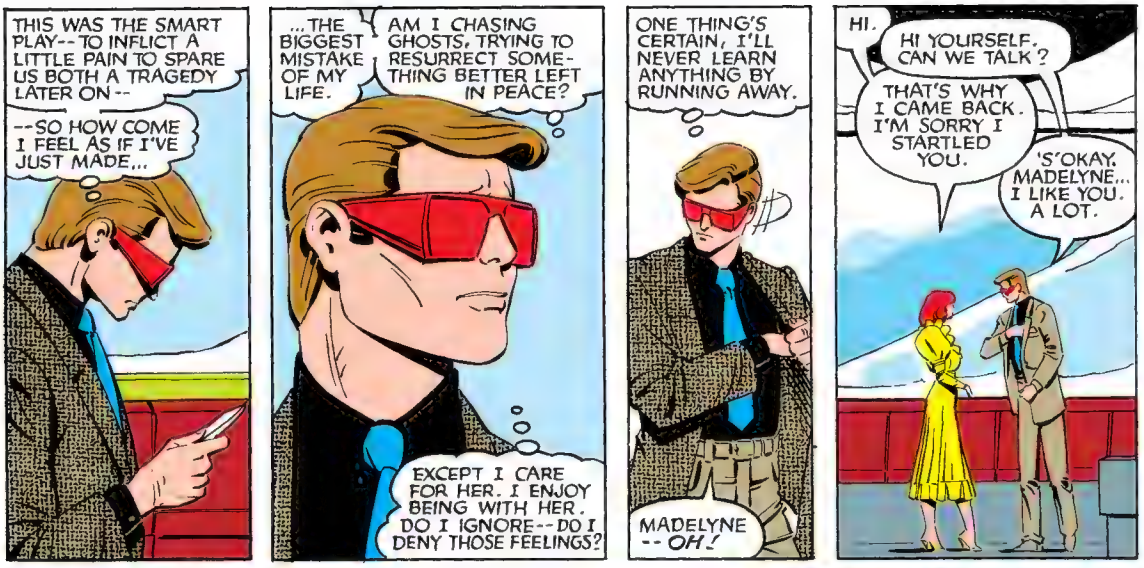
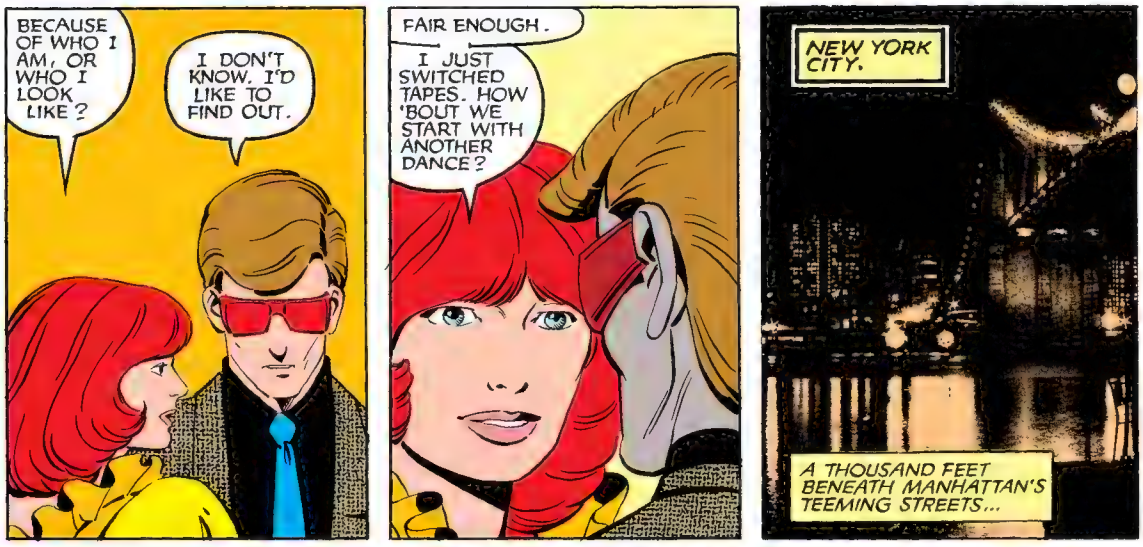
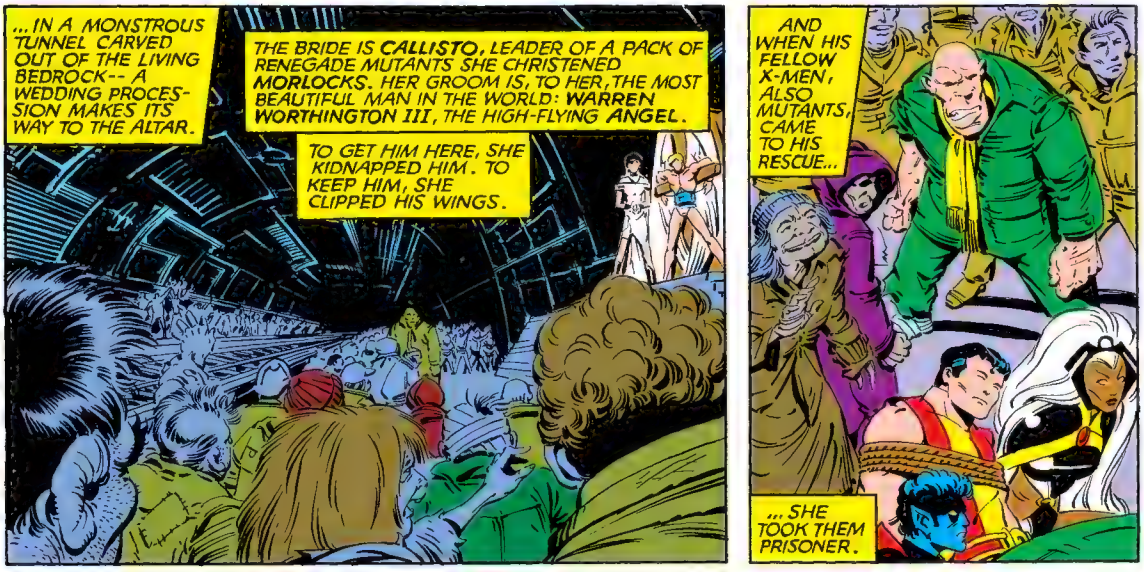

REINDEER FALLS, ALASKA
THE AIR IS STILL, THE VALLEY SILENT-- SAVE FOR THE MUTED ECHO OF A SONG, COMING FROM THE CHALET.
EVERYONE ELSE-- STAFF AND GUESTS-- HAVE LONG SINCE GONE TO BED.
ONLY THIS YOUNG COUPLE REMAINS, TO DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY.
HER NAME IS MADELYNE PRYOR, PILOT FOR NORTH STAR AIRWAYS.
HIS IS SCOTT SUMMERS, HER BOSSES' GRANDSON.
THIS IS THEIR FIRST DATE-- AFTER WEEKS OF FLYING CARGO ALL ACROSS THE STATE-- AND BOTH ARE DISCOVERING THAT IT'S TURNING OUT TO BE A LOT MORE THAN THEY BARGAINED FOR.
THEY DON'T MIND A BIT.
dancin' in the dark

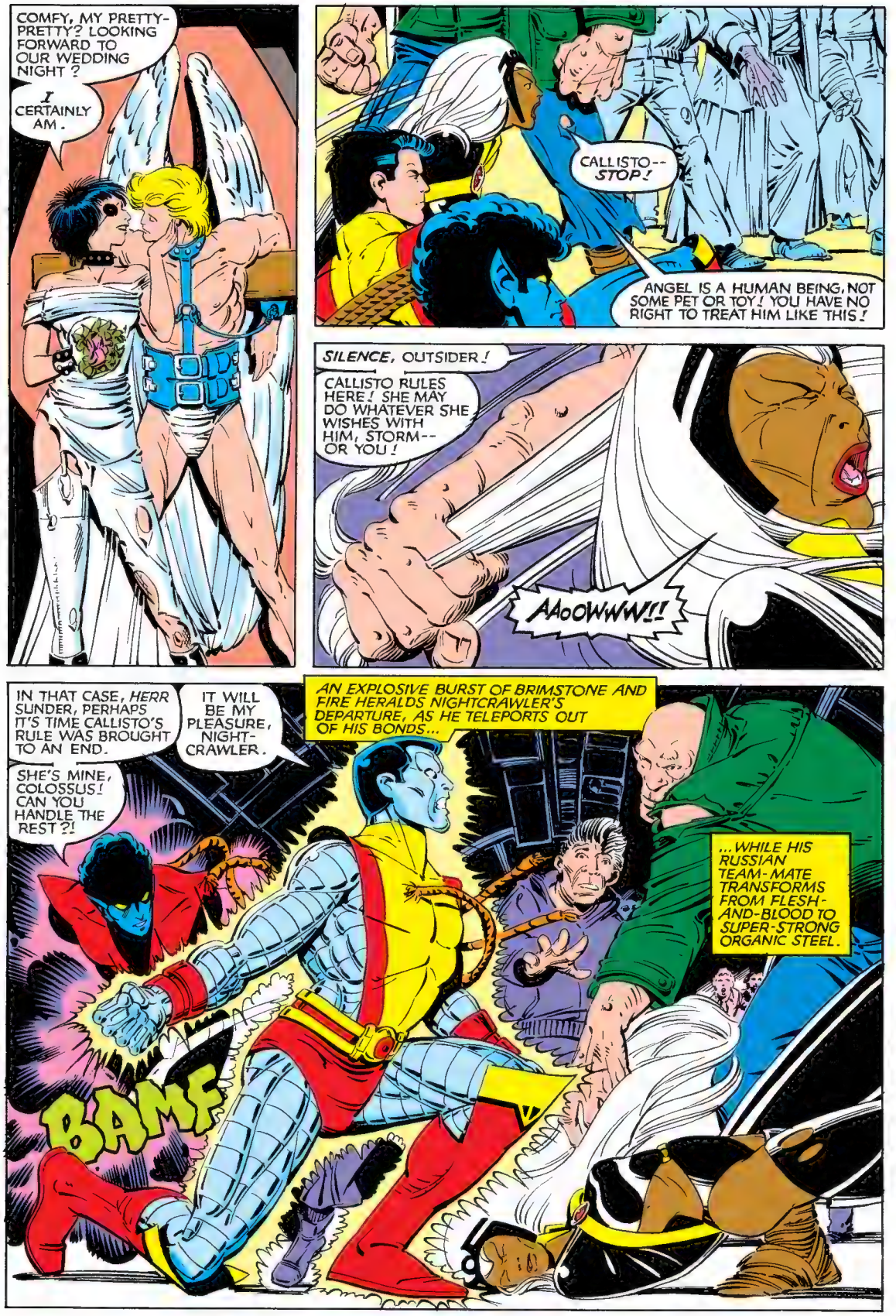

THE MUSIC ENDS, BUT THEY CONTINUE, AS IF IT WAS STILL PLAYING...
...THE TWO HOLDING EACH OTHER CLOSE, MOVING AS ONE...
...UNTIL, FINALLY...
I'D, ah, BETTER CHANGE THAT TAPE.
YOU DANCE AS WELL AS YOU FLY.
WHY, THANK YOU, SCOTT-- THAT'S QUITE A COMPLIMENT.
YOU'RE PRETTY GOOD YOURSELF.
IF ONLY THAT WERE TRUE.
Hmnh-- I LOST TRACK OF THE TIME --IT MUST BE WAY PAST CLOSING.
I'M SURPRISED THE OWNER HASN'T CHASED US OUT.
NEVER HAPPEN.
WHY NOT?
RIDGE OWES ME. I PULLED HIS SON OUT OF A PLANE CRASH LAST YEAR WHEN EVERYONE ELSE HAD GIVEN THE KID UP FOR LOST.
WE COULD STAY THE NIGHT, THE WEEKEND-- THE ENTIRE WINTER-- IN THE BEST SUITE IN THE PLACE, AND HE WOULDN'T SQUAWK.
TEMPTED?
VERY.
GOOD LORD, SHE'S SERIOUS! AND... AND...
...SO AM I.
SCOTT--??
THIS IS CRAZY. I SHOULDN'T BE HERE-- I SHOULD HAVE CAUGHT THE FIRST FLIGHT SOUTH THE MOMENT WE MET. EACH TIME I SEE MADELYNE, I FEEL THE KNIFE TWIST DEEPER INTO MY HEART.
WHAT'S THE MATTER, WHAT'S WRONG?!
AND YET, WHEN I'M WITH HER, I DON'T CARE.


TALK TO ME, PLEASE, SCOTT. I WANT TO HELP!
THE ONLY WAY TO DO THAT IS TO GET HER OUT OF MY LIFE, NOW AND FOREVER, BEFORE IT'S...
...TOO LATE...
A MINUTE AGO YOU WERE SO ALIVE AND RELAXED--SO HAPPY--THEN, YOU CHANGED COMPLETELY. WAS IT SOMETHING I SAID OR DID? I DIDN'T MEAN TO PUT YOU ON THE SPOT ABOUT THE WEEK-END. I AMAZED MYSELF WHEN I SAID IT; I'VE NEVER BEEN SO FORWARD, WITH ANYONE.
IT ISN'T YOU, MADELYNE.
AND YET, IT IS.
THERE WAS A WOMAN, JEAN GREY.
WE WERE IN LOVE. WE PLANNED TO GET MARRIED. BUT BEFORE WE COULD...
...SHE DIED.
I THOUGH I'D PUT THE GRIEF, THE LOSS --THE... JOY-- BEHIND ME...
...UNTIL I MET YOU.
Forever Jean
ME. SHE'S ME!
I MUST HAVE SEEMED THE ANSWER TO YOUR PRAYERS, huh, SCOTT? A DREAM--OR, PERHAPS, A NIGHTMARE--COME TRUE.
OF COURSE. I UNDER-STAND.
THIS TAKES SOME GETTING USED TO. I... I HAVE TO THINK ABOUT IT, ALONE.
THEY'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER SUCH A SHORT TIME, BUT HAVE GROWN CLOSER THAN EITHER WOULD HAVE BELIEVED POSSIBLE. BONDS OF FRIENDSHIP WERE GROWING INTO SOMETHING MORE.
NOW, ALL THAT IS GONE.
AN ABYSS GAPES BETWEEN THEM--BOTTOMLESS, SEEM-INGLY UNBRIDGEABLE.

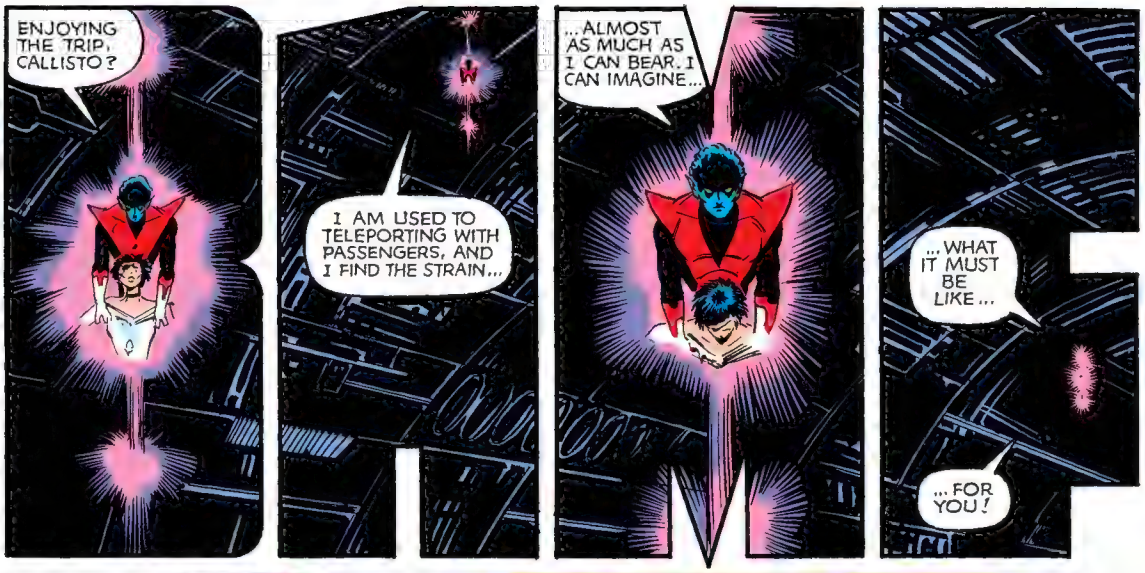

THIS WAS THE SMART PLAY--TO INFLICT A LITTLE PAIN TO SPARE US BOTH A TRAGEDY LATER ON--
--SO HOW COME I FEEL AS IF I'VE JUST MADE...
...THE BIGGEST MISTAKE OF MY LIFE.
AM I CHASING GHOSTS, TRYING TO RESURRECT SOMETHING BETTER LEFT IN PEACE?
EXCEPT I CARE FOR HER. I ENJOY BEING WITH HER. DO I IGNORE--DO I DENY THOSE FEELINGS?
ONE THING'S CERTAIN, I'LL NEVER LEARN ANYTHING BY RUNNING AWAY.
MADELYNE --OH!
HI.
HI YOURSELF. CAN WE TALK?
THAT'S WHY I CAME BACK. I'M SORRY I STARTLED YOU.
'S'OKAY. MADELYNE... I LIKE YOU. A LOT.

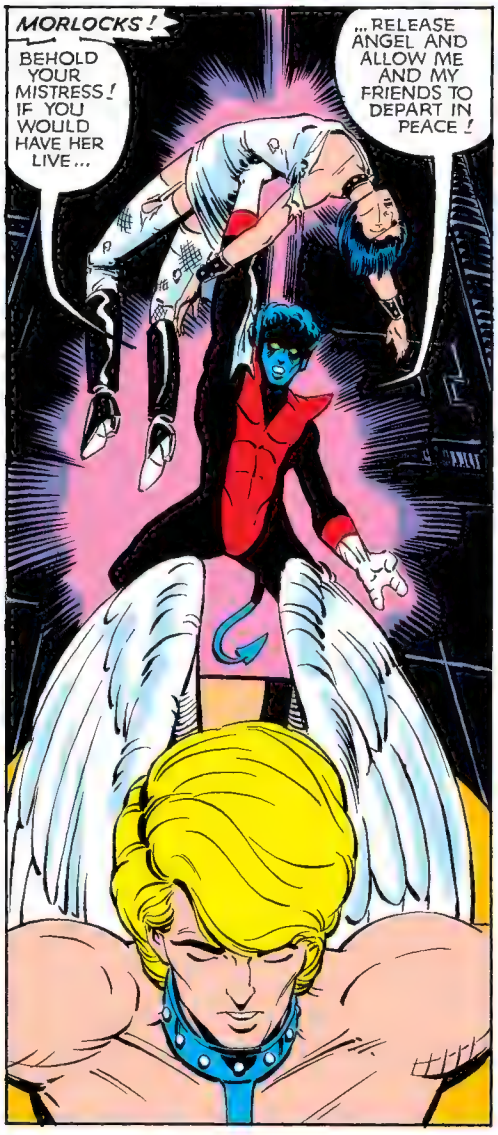

BECAUSE OF WHO I AM, OR WHO I LOOK LIKE?
I DON'T KNOW. I'D LIKE TO FIND OUT.
FAIR ENOUGH.
I JUST SWITCHED TAPES. HOW 'BOUT WE START WITH ANOTHER DANCE?
NEW YORK CITY.
A THOUSAND FEET BENEATH MANHATTAN'S TEEMING STREETS...

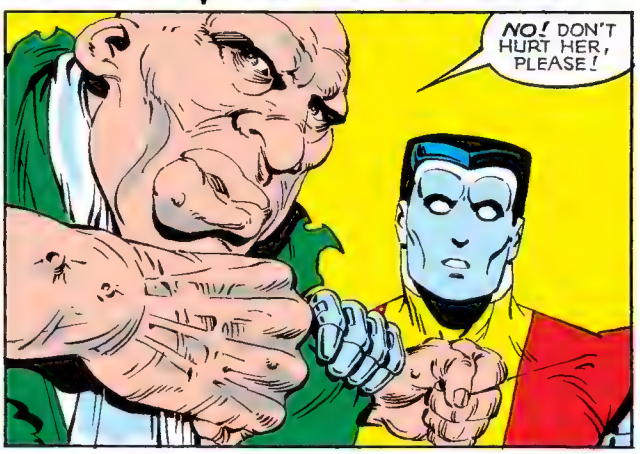

...IN A MONSTROUS TUNNEL CARVED OUT OF THE LIVING BEDROCK-- A WEDDING PROCESSION MAKES ITS WAY TO THE ALTAR.
THE BRIDE IS CALLISTO, LEADER OF A PACK OF RENEGADE MUTANTS SHE CHRISTENED MORLOCKS. HER GROOM IS, TO HER, THE MOST BEAUTIFUL MAN IN THE WORLD: WARREN WORTHINGTON III, THE HIGH-FLYING ANGEL.
TO GET HIM HERE, SHE KIDNAPPED HIM. TO KEEP HIM, SHE CLIPPED HIS WINGS.
AND WHEN HIS FELLOW X-MEN, ALSO MUTANTS, CAME TO HIS RESCUE...
... SHE TOOK THEM PRISONER.

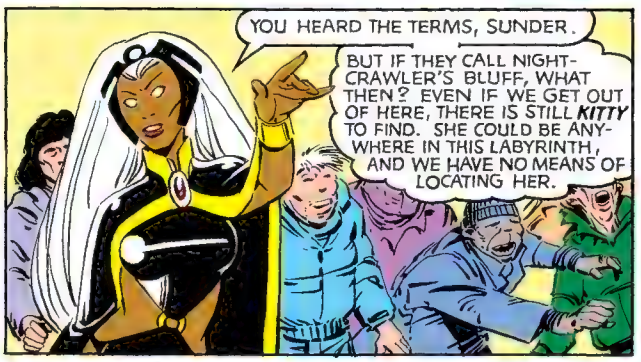

COMFY, MY PRETTY-PRETTY? LOOKING FORWARD TO OUR WEDDING NIGHT?
I CERTAINLY AM.
CALLISTO--STOP!
ANGEL IS A HUMAN BEING, NOT SOME PET OR TOY! YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO TREAT HIM LIKE THIS!
SILENCE, OUTSIDER!
CALLISTO RULES HERE! SHE MAY DO WHATEVER SHE WISHES WITH HIM, STORM--OR YOU!
AAooWWW!!
IN THAT CASE, HERR SUNDER, PERHAPS IT'S TIME CALLISTO'S RULE WAS BROUGHT TO AN END.
IT WILL BE MY PLEASURE, NIGHT-CRAWLER.
SHE'S MINE, COLOSSUS! CAN YOU HANDLE THE REST?!
AN EXPLOSIVE BURST OF BRIMSTONE AND FIRE HERALDS NIGHTCRAWLER'S DEPARTURE, AS HE TELEPORTS OUT OF HIS BONDS...
...WHILE HIS RUSSIAN TEAM-MATE TRANSFORMS FROM FLESH-AND-BLOOD TO SUPER-STRONG ORGANIC STEEL.
BAMF

PARTY'S OVER, FRAULEIN.
YOU ARE VERY GOOD AT TERRORIZING THOSE SMALLER AND WEAKER THAN YOU, SUNDER.
LET US SEE HOW WELL YOU FARE AGAINST SOMEONE YOUR OWN SIZE!
WE HAVE MADE A FAIR START, BUT WE ARE THREE FACING GODDESS KNOWS HOW MANY.
I MUST EQUALIZE THE ODDS.
FORTUNATELY, THIS TUNNEL IS VAST ENOUGH TO ENABLE ME TO GENERATE THE WILD WEATHER PATTERNS I REQUIRE.
AT STORM'S MENTAL COMMAND, LIGHTNING FLARES ABOUT HER, SCATTERING THE CROWD.
THE LONGER WE STAY, THE GREATER OUR DANGER. WE HAVE TO FREE ANGEL AND MAKE OUR ESCAPE...
...WHILE WE STILL HAVE THE CHANCE.


ENJOYING THE TRIP, CALLISTO?
I AM USED TO TELEPORTING WITH PASSENGERS, AND I FIND THE STRAIN...
...ALMOST AS MUCH AS I CAN IMAGINE...
...WHAT IT MUST BE LIKE...
...FOR YOU!

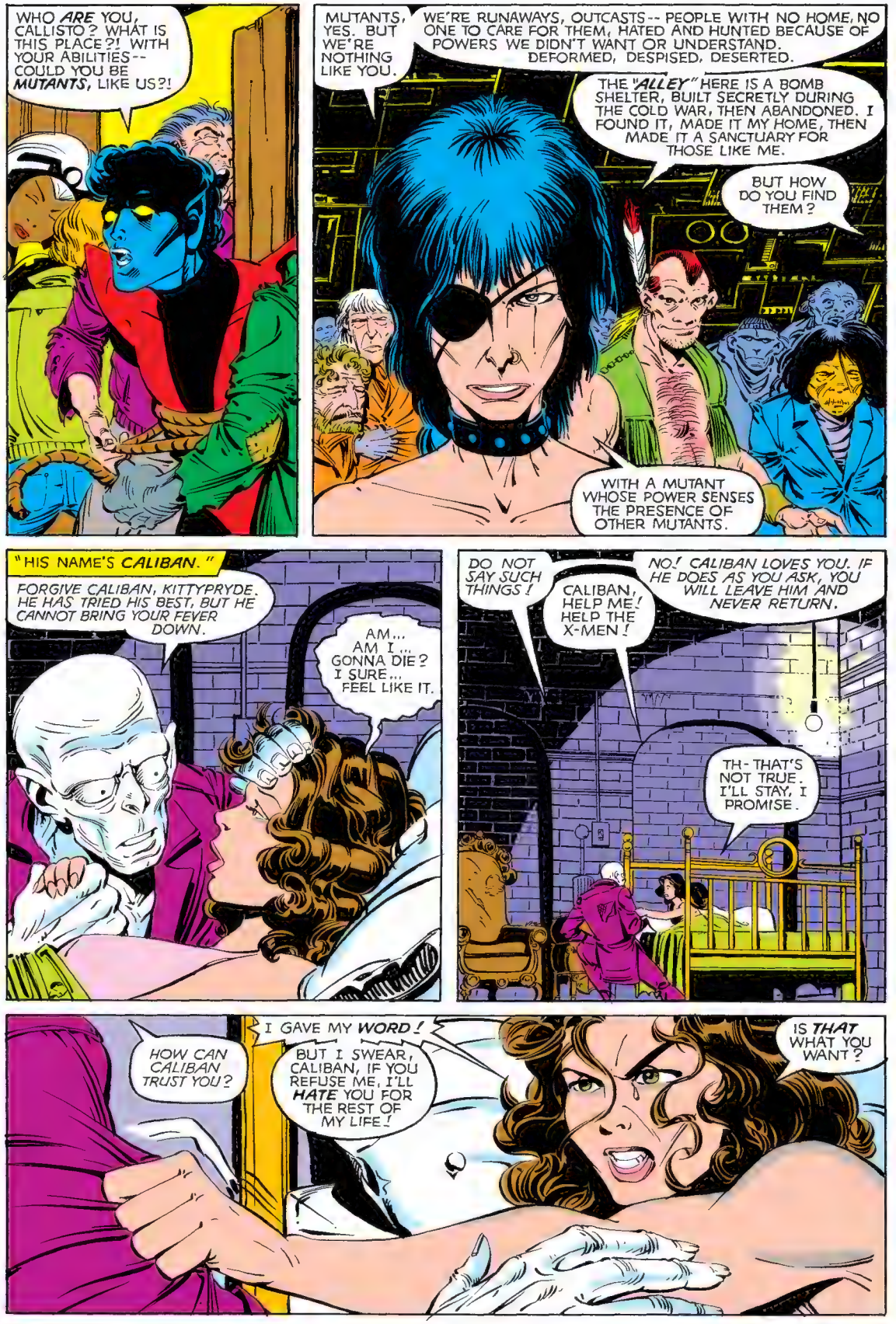

MORLOCKS!
BEHOLD YOUR MISTRESS! IF YOU WOULD HAVE HER LIVE...
...RELEASE ANGEL AND ALLOW ME AND MY FRIENDS TO DEPART IN PEACE!

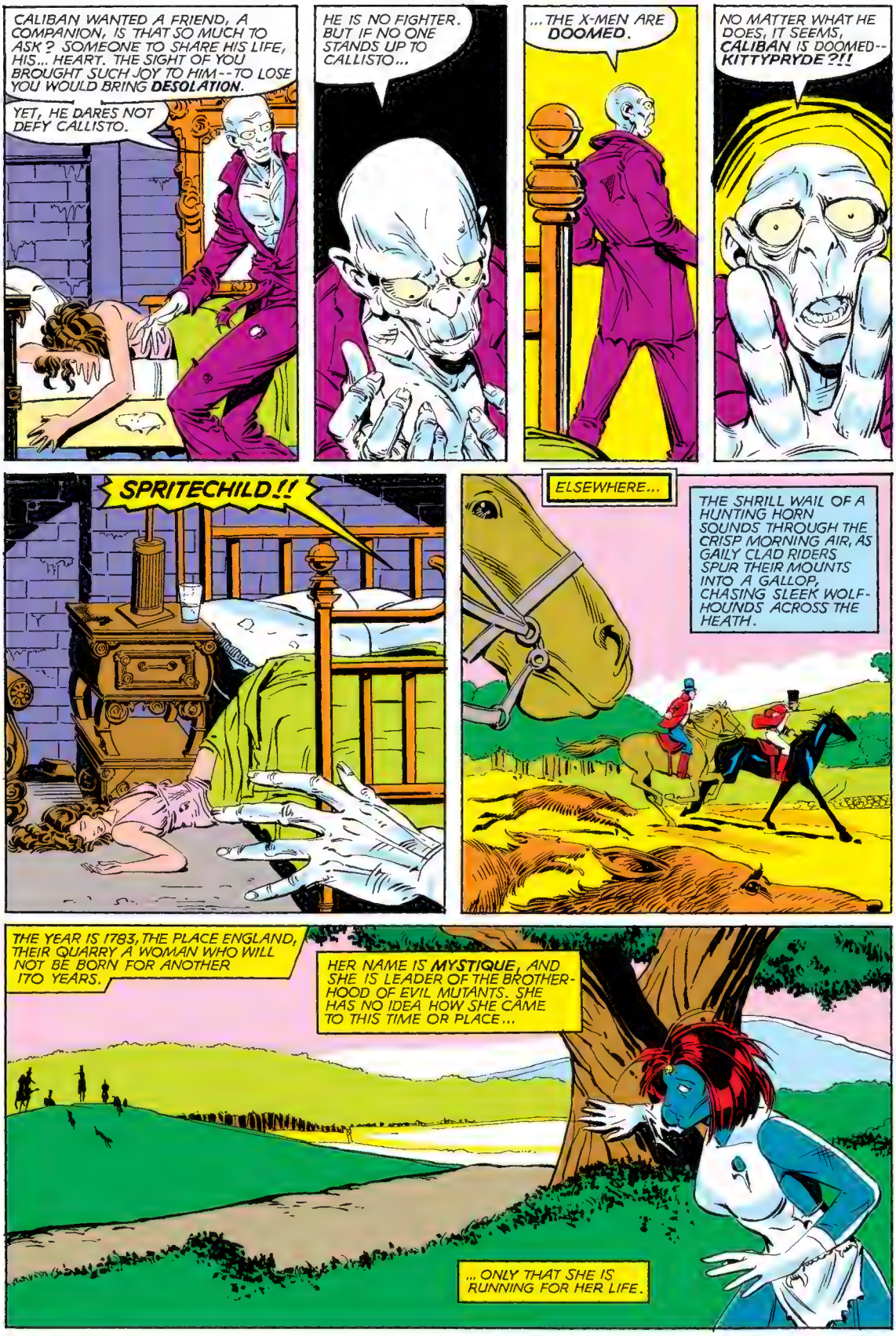

NO! DON'T HURT HER, PLEASE!


YOU HEARD THE TERMS, SUNDER.
BUT IF THEY CALL NIGHT-CRAWLER'S BLUFF, WHAT THEN? EVEN IF WE GET OUT OF HERE, THERE IS STILL KITTY TO FIND. SHE COULD BE ANY-WHERE IN THIS LABYRINTH, AND WE HAVE NO MEANS OF LOCATING HER.

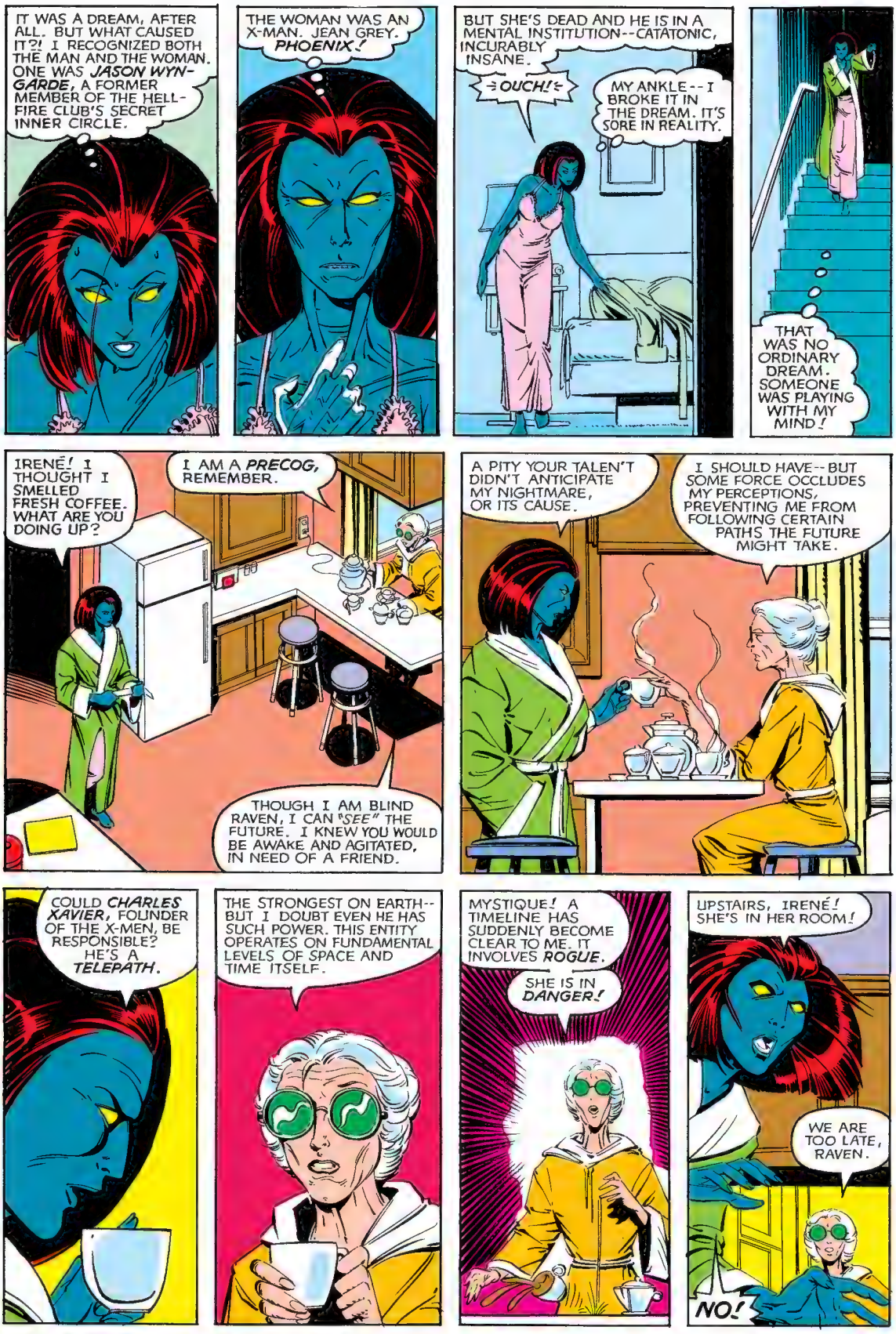
WHO--WHAT-- ARE THESE MORLOCKS?! SUNDER STILL STANDS AFTER TRADING PUNCHES WITH COLOSSUS. NO NORMAL MAN COULD DO THAT--EH?!!
DON'T BE FRIGHTENED, DEARIE.
WHAT HARM COULD A LITTLE OLD LADY DO...

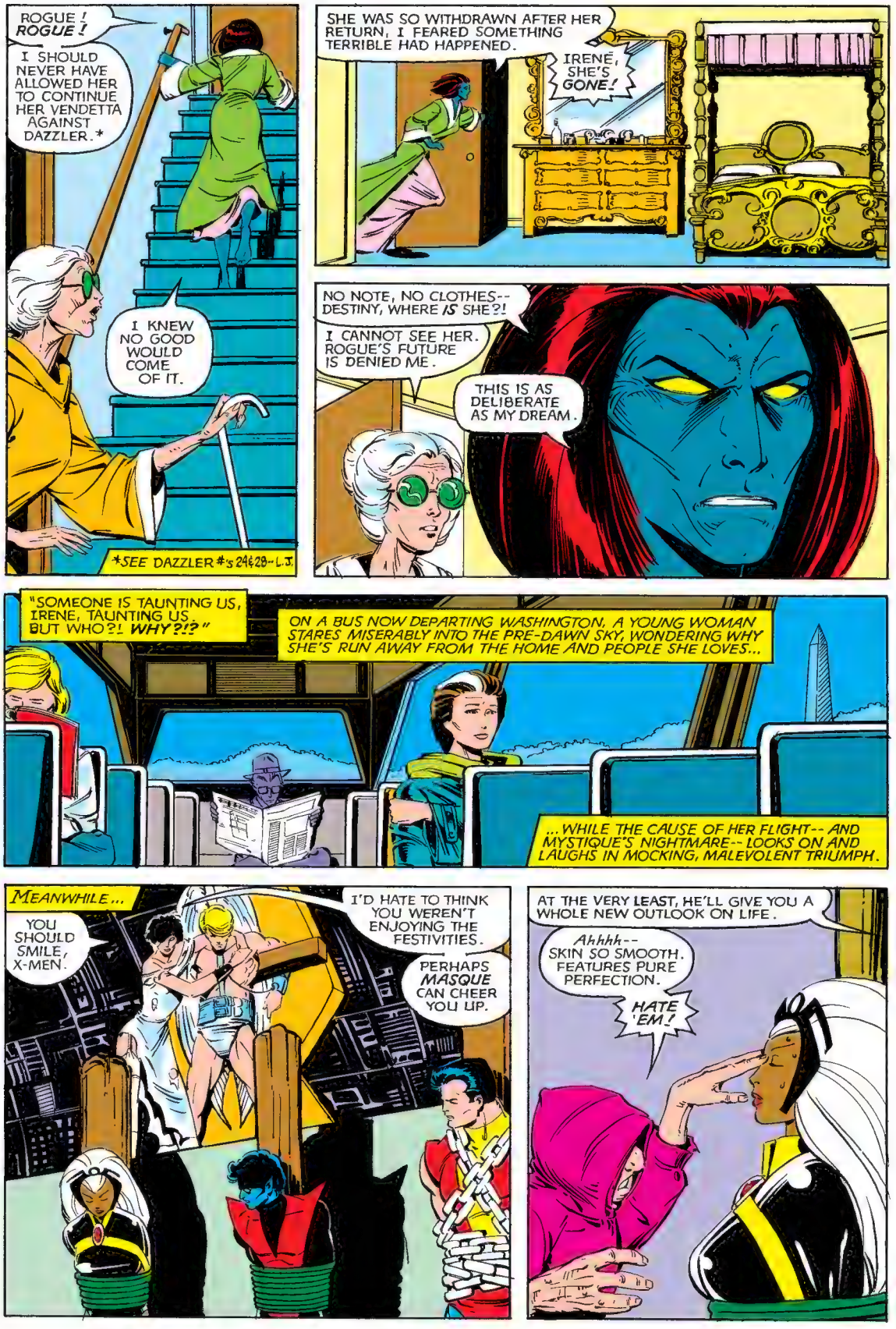
... A LITTLE OLD LADY WHOSE NAME IS PLAGUE!
HA! HA! HAHHH!!
SHOE'S ON T'OTHER FOOT NOW, AIN'T IT?
Unnhhhhhh....
YOU GOT CALLISTO, I GOT STORM. HER FEVER'S TEMPORARY. SHE'LL BE SICK AS A DOG, BUT SHE'LL SURVIVE. I TOUCH HER AGAIN, AN' SHE'LL DIE IN AGONY. GIVE UP, PRETTY BOY, OR I'LL DO IT!
WE HAVE NO CHOICE. THE X-MEN DO NOT KILL.
I COULD GO FOR HELP--BUT WHO KNOWS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO ORORO AND PETER WHILE I WAS GONE. IT'S BETTER THAT I STAY, TO LEARN EVERYTHING I CAN ABOUT THE MORLOCKS, AND WAIT FOR A CHANCE TO HELP US ALL.
SAME GOES FOR YOU TOO, BIG FELLA.
I... YIELD.
HEY, CAL, I GOT SOME POLYMER CABLE EVEN SUNDER COULDN'T BREAK. THAT SHOULD HOLD THE TIN MAN. BUT WHAT ABOUT THE DEMON? HE CAN DISAPPEAR OUTTA ANYTHING!
SO LONG AS WE HOLD HIS FRIENDS HOSTAGE, NIGHTCRAWLER WON'T BE GOING ANYWHERE. AND WHEN I'M FINISHED WITH HIM...
...HE WON'T BE ABLE TO.
YOU'RE A FOOL, X-MAN. WERE OUR POSITIONS REVERSED, I'D HAVE KILLED WITHOUT COMPUNCTION.


WHO ARE YOU, CALLISTO? WHAT IS THIS PLACE?! WITH YOUR ABILITIES -- COULD YOU BE MUTANTS, LIKE US?!
MUTANTS, YES. BUT WE'RE NOTHING LIKE YOU.
WE'RE RUNAWAYS, OUTCASTS -- PEOPLE WITH NO HOME, NO ONE TO CARE FOR THEM, HATED AND HUNTED BECAUSE OF POWERS WE DIDN'T WANT OR UNDERSTAND. DEFORMED, DESPISED, DESERTED.
THE "ALLEY" HERE IS A BOMB SHELTER, BUILT SECRETLY DURING THE COLD WAR, THEN ABANDONED. I FOUND IT, MADE IT MY HOME, THEN MADE IT A SANCTUARY FOR THOSE LIKE ME.
BUT HOW DO YOU FIND THEM?
WITH A MUTANT WHOSE POWER SENSES THE PRESENCE OF OTHER MUTANTS.
"HIS NAME'S CALIBAN."
FORGIVE CALIBAN, KITTYPRYDE. HE HAS TRIED HIS BEST, BUT HE CANNOT BRING YOUR FEVER DOWN.
AM... AM I... GONNA DIE? I SURE... FEEL LIKE IT.
DO NOT SAY SUCH THINGS!
CALIBAN, HELP ME! HELP THE X-MEN!
NO! CALIBAN LOVES YOU. IF HE DOES AS YOU ASK, YOU WILL LEAVE HIM AND NEVER RETURN.
TH- THAT'S NOT TRUE. I'LL STAY, I PROMISE.
HOW CAN CALIBAN TRUST YOU?
I GAVE MY WORD!
BUT I SWEAR, CALIBAN, IF YOU REFUSE ME, I'LL HATE YOU FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!
IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?

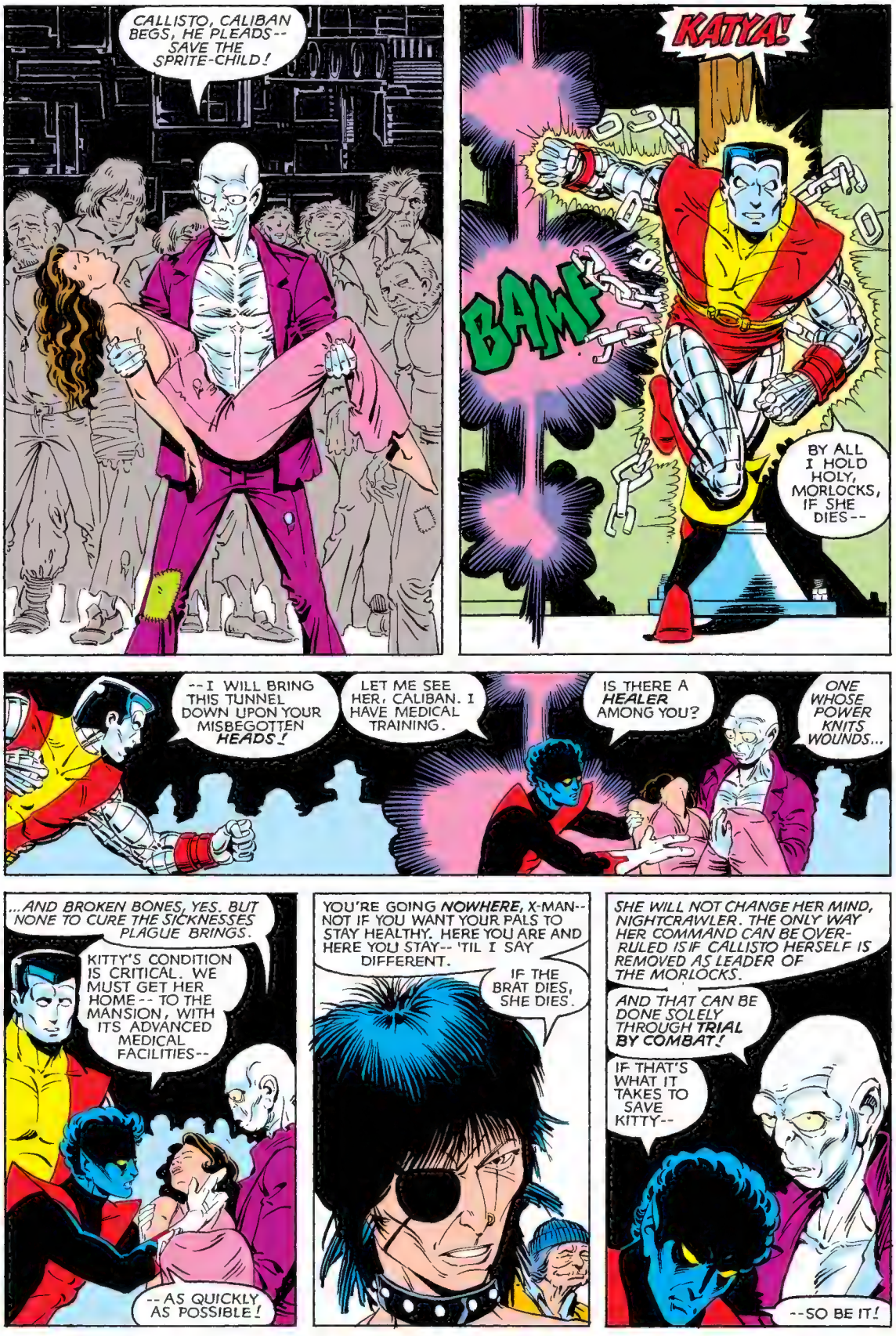

CALIBAN WANTED A FRIEND, A COMPANION, IS THAT SO MUCH TO ASK? SOMEONE TO SHARE HIS LIFE, HIS... HEART. THE SIGHT OF YOU BROUGHT SUCH JOY TO HIM--TO LOSE YOU WOULD BRING DESOLATION.
YET, HE DARES NOT DEFY CALLISTO.
HE IS NO FIGHTER. BUT IF NO ONE STANDS UP TO CALLISTO...
...THE X-MEN ARE DOOMED.
NO MATTER WHAT HE DOES, IT SEEMS, CALIBAN IS DOOMED--KITTYPRYDE?!!
SPRITECHILD!!
ELSEWHERE...
THE SHRILL WAIL OF A HUNTING HORN SOUNDS THROUGH THE CRISP MORNING AIR, AS GAILY CLAD RIDERS SPUR THEIR MOUNTS INTO A GALLOP, CHASING SLEEK WOLF-HOUNDS ACROSS THE HEATH.
THE YEAR IS 1783, THE PLACE ENGLAND, THEIR QUARRY A WOMAN WHO WILL NOT BE BORN FOR ANOTHER 170 YEARS.
HER NAME IS MYSTIQUE, AND SHE IS LEADER OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS. SHE HAS NO IDEA HOW SHE CAME TO THIS TIME OR PLACE...
... ONLY THAT SHE IS RUNNING FOR HER LIFE.

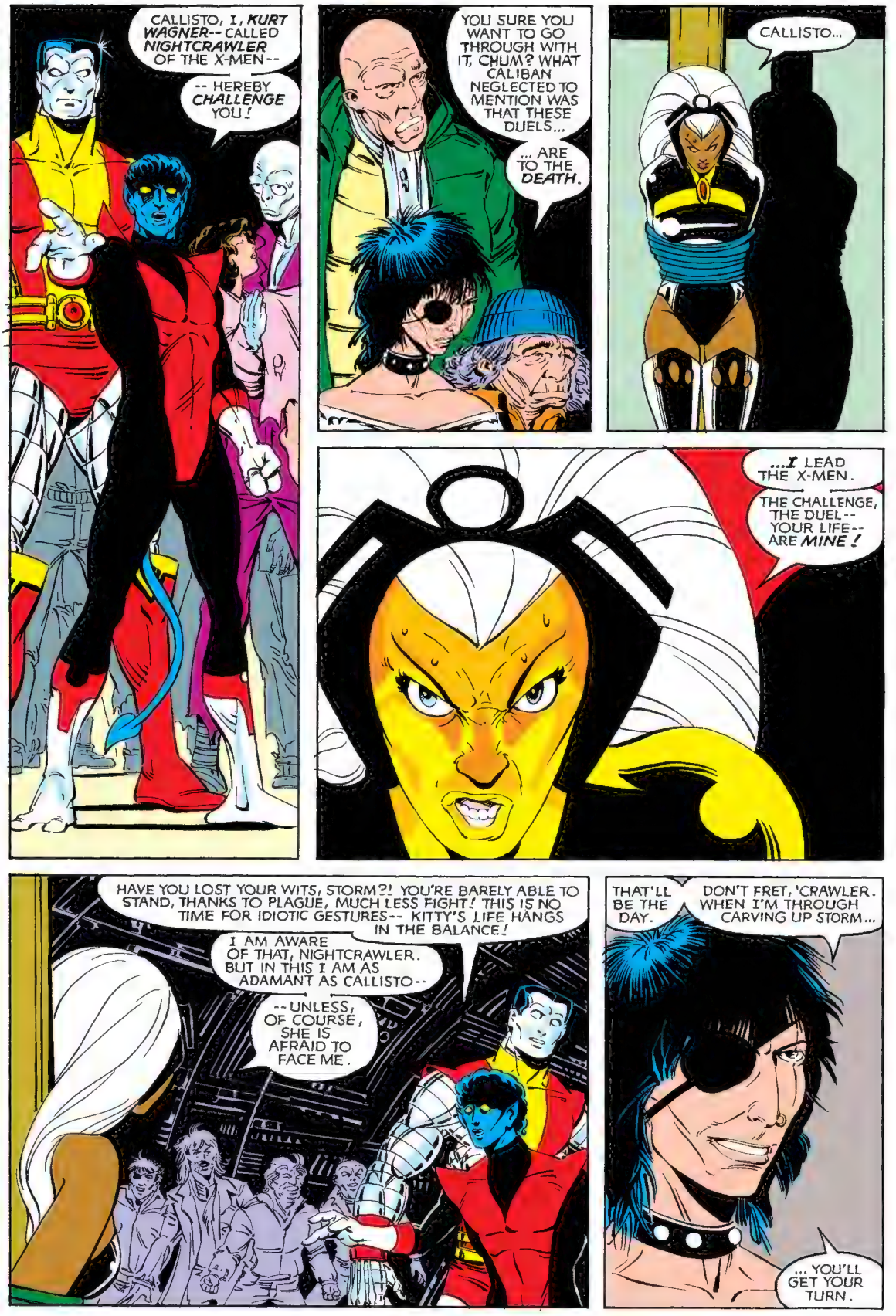
THIS IS MADNESS!
I WAS IN BED, IN MY HOUSE-- BUT NO DREAM EVER FELT SO REAL--
-- MY FOOT!
THE ANKLE IS BROKEN, SHE'LL RUN NO MORE. AS SHE SPRAWLS INTO THE BROOK...
... SHE HEARS THE HOUNDS...
... AND MOMENTS LATER, FEELS THEIR TEETH TEARING AT CLOTHES AND FLESH.
WHOA, SATAN-- WHOA!
SIR JASON-- THE DOGS!
I'LL DEAL WITH 'EM, MILADY.
BACK, YOU CURS! BACK, I SAY!
YYYIPE!
WE'RE FORTUNATE INDEED, MILADY. THE BEAST STILL LIVES.
AS THE FIRST TO RUN IT TO THE GROUND, TO YOU GOES THE HONOR OF ADMINISTERING THE COUP DE GRACE.
THANK YOU, SIR JASON.
I CAN'T REMEMBER WHEN I'VE HAD FINER SPORT, MILADY.
WITH A SMILE OF PURE JOY, LADY JEAN GREY...
... SLASHES HER BLADE ACROSS MYSTIQUE'S THROAT.
AND THE MADNESS ENDS. FOR A TIME.
NO!
NO.
I... LIVE!


IT WAS A DREAM, AFTER ALL. BUT WHAT CAUSED IT?! I RECOGNIZED BOTH THE MAN AND THE WOMAN. ONE WAS JASON WYNGARDE, A FORMER MEMBER OF THE HELLFIRE CLUB'S SECRET INNER CIRCLE.
THE WOMAN WAS AN X-MAN. JEAN GREY. PHOENIX!
BUT SHE'S DEAD AND HE IS IN A MENTAL INSTITUTION--CATATONIC, INCURABLY INSANE.
=OUCH!=
MY ANKLE--I BROKE IT IN THE DREAM. IT'S SORE IN REALITY.
THAT WAS NO ORDINARY DREAM. SOMEONE WAS PLAYING WITH MY MIND!
IRENE! I THOUGHT I SMELLED FRESH COFFEE. WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP?
I AM A PRECOG, REMEMBER.
THOUGH I AM BLIND RAVEN, I CAN "SEE" THE FUTURE. I KNEW YOU WOULD BE AWAKE AND AGITATED, IN NEED OF A FRIEND.
A PITY YOUR TALEN'T DIDN'T ANTICIPATE MY NIGHTMARE, OR ITS CAUSE.
I SHOULD HAVE--BUT SOME FORCE OCCLUDES MY PERCEPTIONS, PREVENTING ME FROM FOLLOWING CERTAIN PATHS THE FUTURE MIGHT TAKE.
COULD CHARLES XAVIER, FOUNDER OF THE X-MEN, BE RESPONSIBLE? HE'S A TELEPATH.
THE STRONGEST ON EARTH--BUT I DOUBT EVEN HE HAS SUCH POWER. THIS ENTITY OPERATES ON FUNDAMENTAL LEVELS OF SPACE AND TIME ITSELF.
MYSTIQUE! A TIMELINE HAS SUDDENLY BECOME CLEAR TO ME. IT INVOLVES ROGUE.
SHE IS IN DANGER!
UPSTAIRS, IRENE! SHE'S IN HER ROOM!
WE ARE TOO LATE, RAVEN.
NO!


ROGUE! ROGUE!
I SHOULD NEVER HAVE ALLOWED HER TO CONTINUE HER VENDETTA AGAINST DAZZLER.*
I KNEW NO GOOD WOULD COME OF IT.
*SEE DAZZLER #'s 24&28--L.J.
SHE WAS SO WITHDRAWN AFTER HER RETURN, I FEARED SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAD HAPPENED.
IRENE, SHE'S GONE!
NO NOTE, NO CLOTHES--DESTINY, WHERE IS SHE?!
I CANNOT SEE HER. ROGUE'S FUTURE IS DENIED ME.
THIS IS AS DELIBERATE AS MY DREAM.
"SOMEONE IS TAUNTING US, IRENE, TAUNTING US. BUT WHO?! WHY?!?"
ON A BUS NOW DEPARTING WASHINGTON, A YOUNG WOMAN STARES MISERABLY INTO THE PRE-DAWN SKY, WONDERING WHY SHE'S RUN AWAY FROM THE HOME AND PEOPLE SHE LOVES...
...WHILE THE CAUSE OF HER FLIGHT-- AND MYSTIQUE'S NIGHTMARE-- LOOKS ON AND LAUGHS IN MOCKING, MALEVOLENT TRIUMPH.
MEANWHILE...
YOU SHOULD SMILE, X-MEN.
I'D HATE TO THINK YOU WEREN'T ENJOYING THE FESTIVITIES.
PERHAPS MASQUE CAN CHEER YOU UP.
AT THE VERY LEAST, HE'LL GIVE YOU A WHOLE NEW OUTLOOK ON LIFE.
Ahhhh-- SKIN SO SMOOTH. FEATURES PURE PERFECTION.
HATE 'EM!

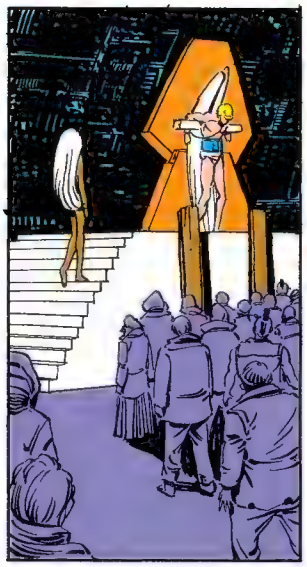
AN' WHAT MASQUE HATES, HE DESTROYS.
STOP IT!!
SHE'S NOT A TOY, SHE'S A HUMAN BEING -- WHO DESERVES TO BE TREATED WITH DIGNITY AND RESPECT!
THAT SO? AN' HOW MUCH "DIGNITY AN' RESPECT" D'YOU THINK I DESERVE, eh? I GOTTA GREAT POWER, Y'KNOW?
I CAN RESHAPE ANY FACE, ANY BODY-- EXCEPT MY OWN!
AN' YOU WONDER WHY I HATE WHAT'S PRETTY?
LEAVE HIM, MASQUE.
I WAS GOING TO LET HIM TURN YOU INSIDE-OUT, NIGHTCRAWLER...
...BUT I'VE CHANGED MY MIND.
YOU HAVE COURAGE-- I LIKE THAT-- AND YOUR FEATURES BRAND YOU AS MUCH AN OUTCAST AS US. WHY DON'T YOU JOIN US?
I WON'T DESERT MY FRIENDS, CALLISTO. MORE IMPORTANTLY, I'VE SPENT MY WHOLE LIFE...
...FIGHTING TO BE ACCEPTED AS I AM-- TO BE JUDGED BY MY DEEDS INSTEAD OF MY LOOKS--
-- I WON'T LEAVE THAT BATTLE BEFORE IT'S DONE -- BLESSED SAINTS!
BROUGHT ME A WEDDING GIFT, CALIBAN? HOW NICE.

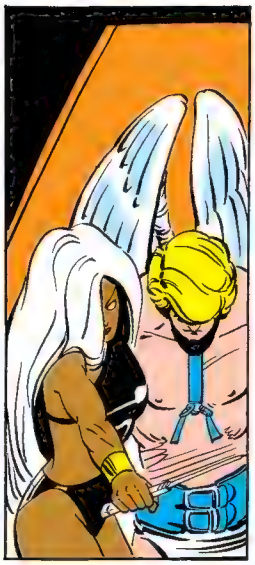

CALLISTO, CALIBAN BEGS, HE PLEADS-- SAVE THE SPRITE-CHILD!
KATYA!
BAMF
BY ALL I HOLD HOLY, MORLOCKS, IF SHE DIES--
--I WILL BRING THIS TUNNEL DOWN UPON YOUR MISBEGOTTEN HEADS!
LET ME SEE HER, CALIBAN. I HAVE MEDICAL TRAINING.
IS THERE A HEALER AMONG YOU?
ONE WHOSE POWER KNITS WOUNDS...
...AND BROKEN BONES, YES. BUT NONE TO CURE THE SICKNESSES PLAGUE BRINGS.
KITTY'S CONDITION IS CRITICAL. WE MUST GET HER HOME -- TO THE MANSION, WITH ITS ADVANCED MEDICAL FACILITIES--
--AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE!
YOU'RE GOING NOWHERE, X-MAN-- NOT IF YOU WANT YOUR PALS TO STAY HEALTHY. HERE YOU ARE AND HERE YOU STAY-- 'TIL I SAY DIFFERENT.
IF THE BRAT DIES, SHE DIES.
SHE WILL NOT CHANGE HER MIND, NIGHTCRAWLER. THE ONLY WAY HER COMMAND CAN BE OVER-RULED IS IF CALLISTO HERSELF IS REMOVED AS LEADER OF THE MORLOCKS.
AND THAT CAN BE DONE SOLELY THROUGH TRIAL BY COMBAT!
IF THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES TO SAVE KITTY--
--SO BE IT!


CALLISTO, I, KURT WAGNER-- CALLED NIGHTCRAWLER OF THE X-MEN--
-- HEREBY CHALLENGE YOU!
YOU SURE YOU WANT TO GO THROUGH WITH IT, CHUM? WHAT CALIBAN NEGLECTED TO MENTION WAS THAT THESE DUELS...
... ARE TO THE DEATH.
CALLISTO...
...I LEAD THE X-MEN.
THE CHALLENGE, THE DUEL-- YOUR LIFE-- ARE MINE!
HAVE YOU LOST YOUR WITS, STORM?! YOU'RE BARELY ABLE TO STAND, THANKS TO PLAGUE, MUCH LESS FIGHT! THIS IS NO TIME FOR IDIOTIC GESTURES-- KITTY'S LIFE HANGS IN THE BALANCE!
I AM AWARE OF THAT, NIGHTCRAWLER. BUT IN THIS I AM AS ADAMANT AS CALLISTO--
--UNLESS, OF COURSE, SHE IS AFRAID TO FACE ME.
THAT'LL BE THE DAY.
DON'T FRET, 'CRAWLER. WHEN I'M THROUGH CARVING UP STORM...
... YOU'LL GET YOUR TURN.

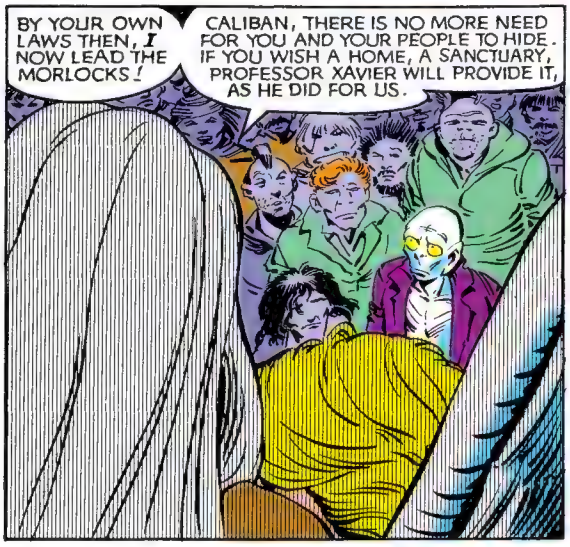
A WORD OF WARNING, LADY: YOU USE YOUR ELEMENTAL POWERS-- SAY, A STRAY LIGHTNING BOLT OR GUST OF WIND--
--AND YOUR PRECIOUS KITTY'S THROAT'LL BE CUT.
I UNDER-STAND.
GREAT.
SHALL WE BEGIN.
WHENEVER YOU ARE READY, CALLISTO.
DID YOU SEE *THAT*, *TOVARISCH*?
A BLUFF, *MEIN FREUND*. ORORO HAS SWORN NEVER TO TAKE A HUMAN LIFE, REMEMBER? ONCE CALLISTO REALIZES THAT...
...STORM IS FINISHED.

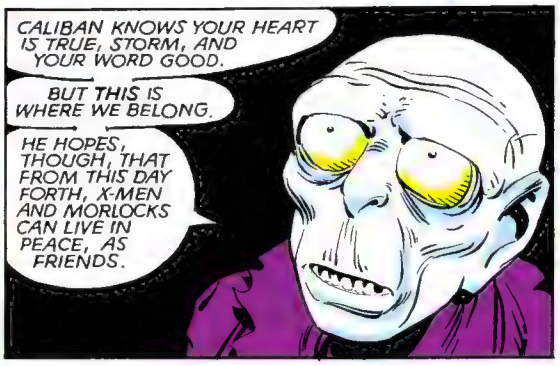
THEY CIRCLE WARILY, EACH GAUGING THE OTHER'S SKILLS, STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES.
CALLISTO IS A BORN HUNTRESS...
... HER MUTANT GENES GIVING HER ENHANCED PHYSICAL ABILITIES THAT RIVAL WOLVERINE'S. ALSO, SHE'S FOUGHT ALL HER LIFE. SHE HAS NO DOUBT OF THE OUTCOME HERE, BUT SHE MEANS TO ENJOY HERSELF IN THE PROCESS.
SHE FEINTS. STORM PARRIES.
CALLISTO DRAWS FIRST BLOOD...
... AND LAUGHS AT STORM'S CLUMSY RESPONSE.
I ALMOST PITY YOU, SILVER-TOP.
YOU'RE MAKING THIS TOO EASY!
AND YOU, CALLISTO, TALK TOO MUCH.
MY ARM--?!!

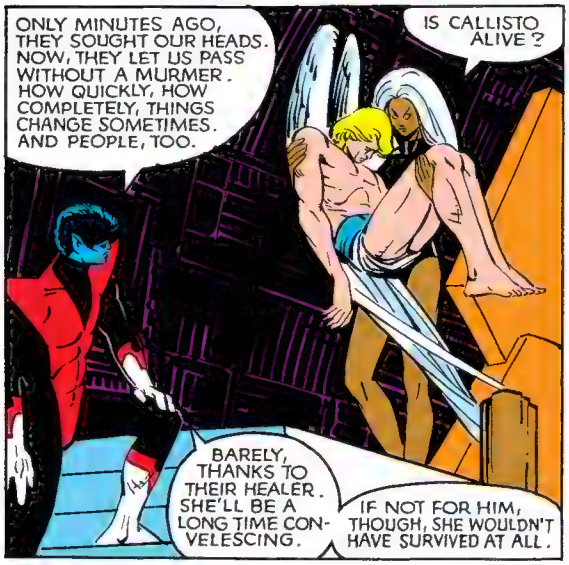


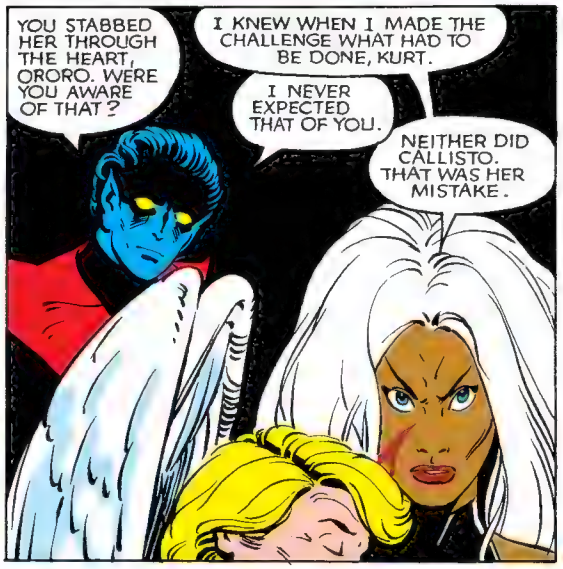


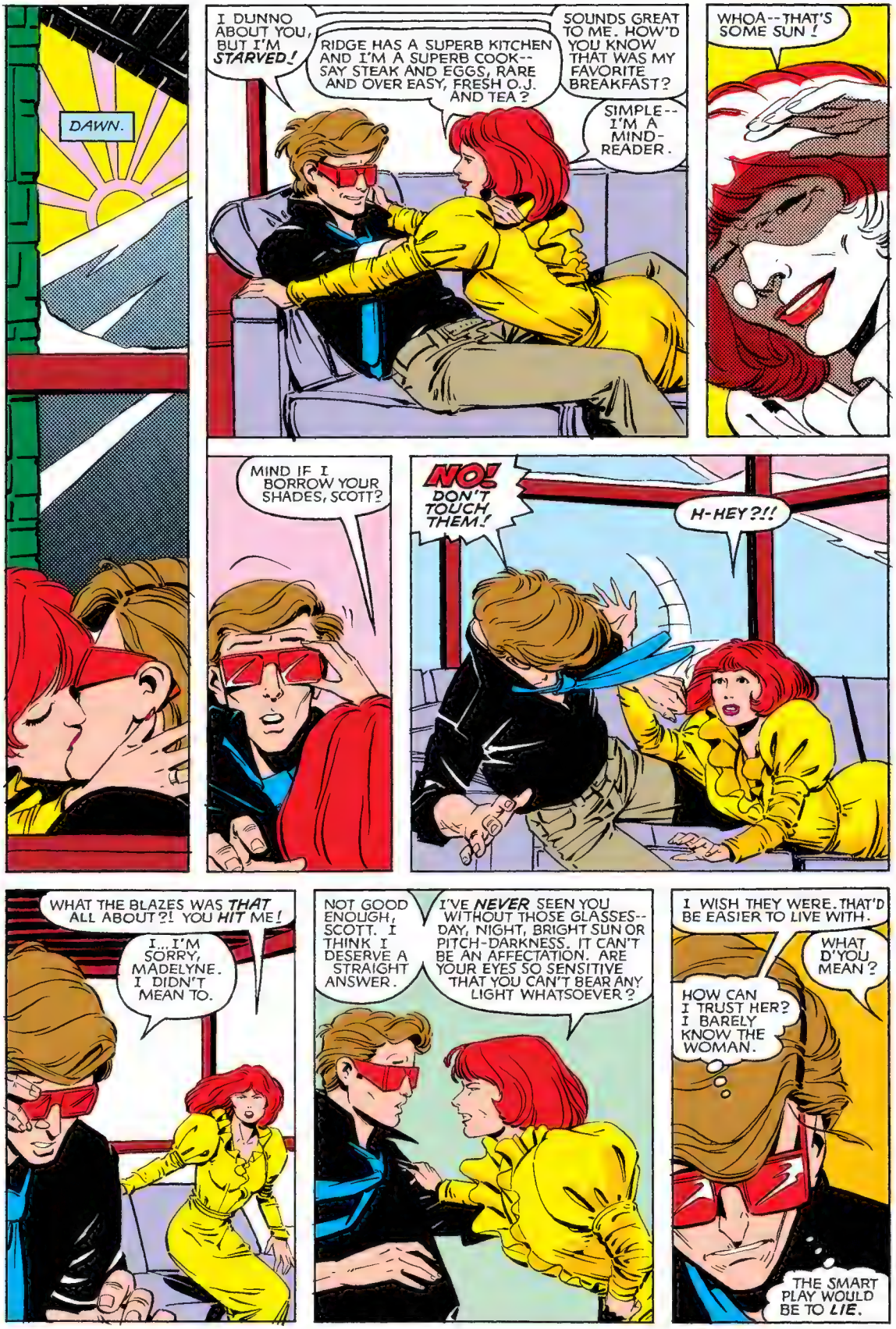
COLOSSUS, WOULD YOU TAKE KITTY, PLEASE-- WE SHALL BE LEAVING HERE DIRECTLY.
IF ANYONE HAS ANY OBJECTIONS, THEY ARE WELCOME TO CHALLENGE ME AS I DID CALLISTO...
...AND RISK THE SAME FATE.

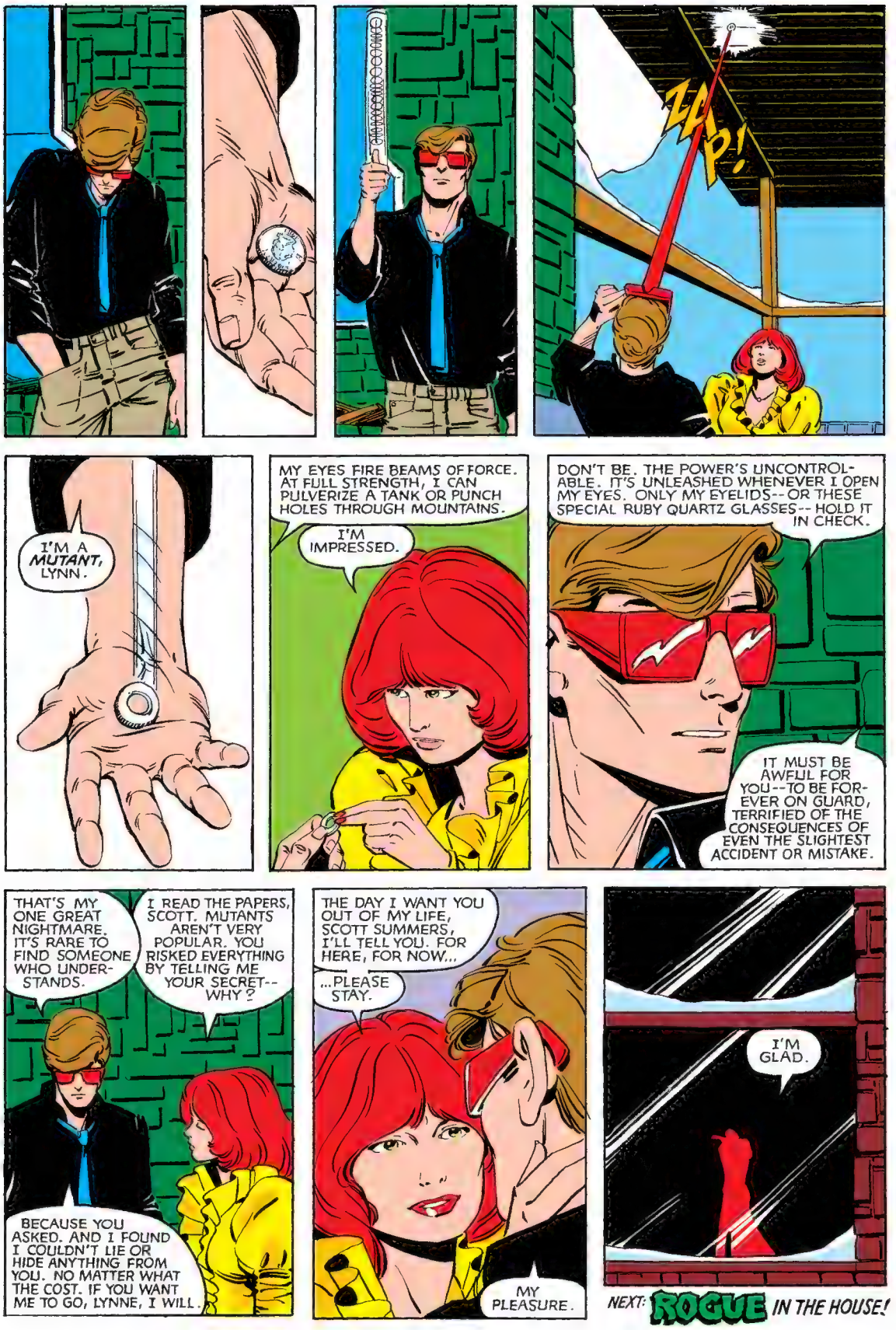

BY YOUR OWN LAWS THEN, I NOW LEAD THE MORLOCKS!
CALIBAN, THERE IS NO MORE NEED FOR YOU AND YOUR PEOPLE TO HIDE. IF YOU WISH A HOME, A SANCTUARY, PROFESSOR XAVIER WILL PROVIDE IT, AS HE DID FOR US.


CALIBAN KNOWS YOUR HEART IS TRUE, STORM, AND YOUR WORD GOOD.
BUT THIS IS WHERE WE BELONG.
HE HOPES, THOUGH, THAT FROM THIS DAY FORTH, X-MEN AND MORLOCKS CAN LIVE IN PEACE, AS FRIENDS.


ONLY MINUTES AGO, THEY SOUGHT OUR HEADS. NOW, THEY LET US PASS WITHOUT A MURMER. HOW QUICKLY, HOW COMPLETELY, THINGS CHANGE SOMETIMES. AND PEOPLE, TOO.
IS CALLISTO ALIVE?
BARELY, THANKS TO THEIR HEALER. SHE'LL BE A LONG TIME CONVELESCING.
IF NOT FOR HIM, THOUGH, SHE WOULDN'T HAVE SURVIVED AT ALL.


YOU STABBED HER THROUGH THE HEART, ORORO. WERE YOU AWARE OF THAT?
I KNEW WHEN I MADE THE CHALLENGE WHAT HAD TO BE DONE, KURT.
I NEVER EXPECTED THAT OF YOU.
NEITHER DID CALLISTO. THAT WAS HER MISTAKE.


DAWN.
I DUNNO ABOUT YOU, BUT I'M STARVED!
RIDGE HAS A SUPERB KITCHEN AND I'M A SUPERB COOK-- SAY STEAK AND EGGS, RARE AND OVER EASY, FRESH O.J. AND TEA?
SOUNDS GREAT TO ME. HOW'D YOU KNOW THAT WAS MY FAVORITE BREAKFAST?
SIMPLE-- I'M A MIND-READER.
WHOA--THAT'S SOME SUN!
MIND IF I BORROW YOUR SHADES, SCOTT?
NO! DON'T TOUCH THEM!
H-HEY?!!
WHAT THE BLAZES WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?! YOU HIT ME!
I..I'M SORRY, MADELYNE. I DIDN'T MEAN TO.
NOT GOOD ENOUGH, SCOTT. I THINK I DESERVE A STRAIGHT ANSWER.
I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU WITHOUT THOSE GLASSES-- DAY, NIGHT, BRIGHT SUN OR PITCH-DARKNESS. IT CAN'T BE AN AFFECTATION. ARE YOUR EYES SO SENSITIVE THAT YOU CAN'T BEAR ANY LIGHT WHATSOEVER?
I WISH THEY WERE. THAT'D BE EASIER TO LIVE WITH.
WHAT D'YOU MEAN?
HOW CAN I TRUST HER? I BARELY KNOW THE WOMAN.
THE SMART PLAY WOULD BE TO LIE.


ZAP!
I'M A MUTANT, LYNN.
MY EYES FIRE BEAMS OF FORCE. AT FULL STRENGTH, I CAN PULVERIZE A TANK OR PUNCH HOLES THROUGH MOUNTAINS.
I'M IMPRESSED.
DON'T BE. THE POWER'S UNCONTROLABLE. IT'S UNLEASHED WHENEVER I OPEN MY EYES. ONLY MY EYELIDS--OR THESE SPECIAL RUBY QUARTZ GLASSES-- HOLD IT IN CHECK.
IT MUST BE AWFUL FOR YOU--TO BE FOREVER ON GUARD, TERRIFIED OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF EVEN THE SLIGHTEST ACCIDENT OR MISTAKE.
THAT'S MY ONE GREAT NIGHTMARE. IT'S RARE TO FIND SOMEONE WHO UNDERSTANDS.
I READ THE PAPERS, SCOTT. MUTANTS AREN'T VERY POPULAR. YOU RISKED EVERYTHING BY TELLING ME YOUR SECRET-- WHY?
BECAUSE YOU ASKED. AND I FOUND I COULDN'T LIE OR HIDE ANYTHING FROM YOU. NO MATTER WHAT THE COST. IF YOU WANT ME TO GO, LYNNE, I WILL.
THE DAY I WANT YOU OUT OF MY LIFE, SCOTT SUMMERS, I'LL TELL YOU. FOR HERE, FOR NOW...
...PLEASE STAY.
MY PLEASURE.
I'M GLAD.
NEXT: ROGUE IN THE HOUSE!

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JULY
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MARVEL® COMICS GROUP
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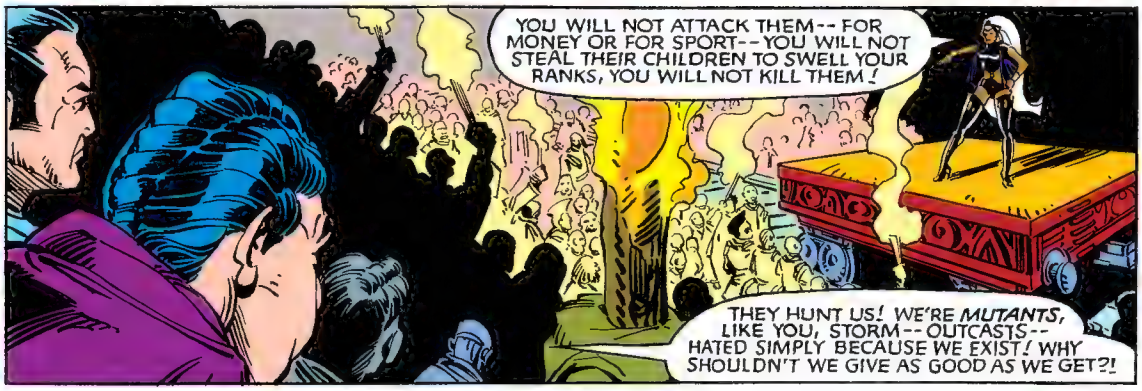
© 1983 MARVEL COMICS GROUP
THE UNCANNY
X-MEN®
TM
WELCOME TO THE X-MEN, ROGUE...
HOPE YOU SURVIVE THE EXPERIENCE!
2-17-83

A STAN LEE *PRESENTATION, STARRING THE* UNCANNY **X-MEN,** *BROUGHT TO YOU BY:*

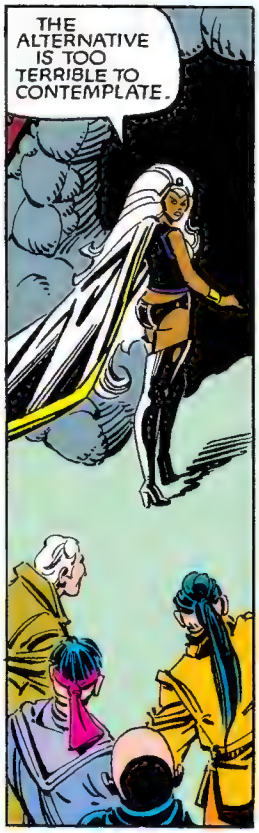
CHRIS CLAREMONT	WALT SIMONSON	BOB WIACEK	TOM ORZECHOWSKI	GLYNIS WEIN	LOUISE JONES	JIM SHOOTER
SCRIPTER	*GUEST PENCILER*	*FINISHER*	*LETTERER*	*COLORIST*	*EDITOR*	*EDITOR-IN-CHIEF*

IF YOU WISH TO LIVE APART FROM HUMANITY-- IN THESE TUNNELS, A THOUSAND FEET BELOW THE STREETS OF NEW YORK-- THEN SO BE IT!
BUT NO MORE WILL YOU TREAT ITS INHABITANTS AS PREY!

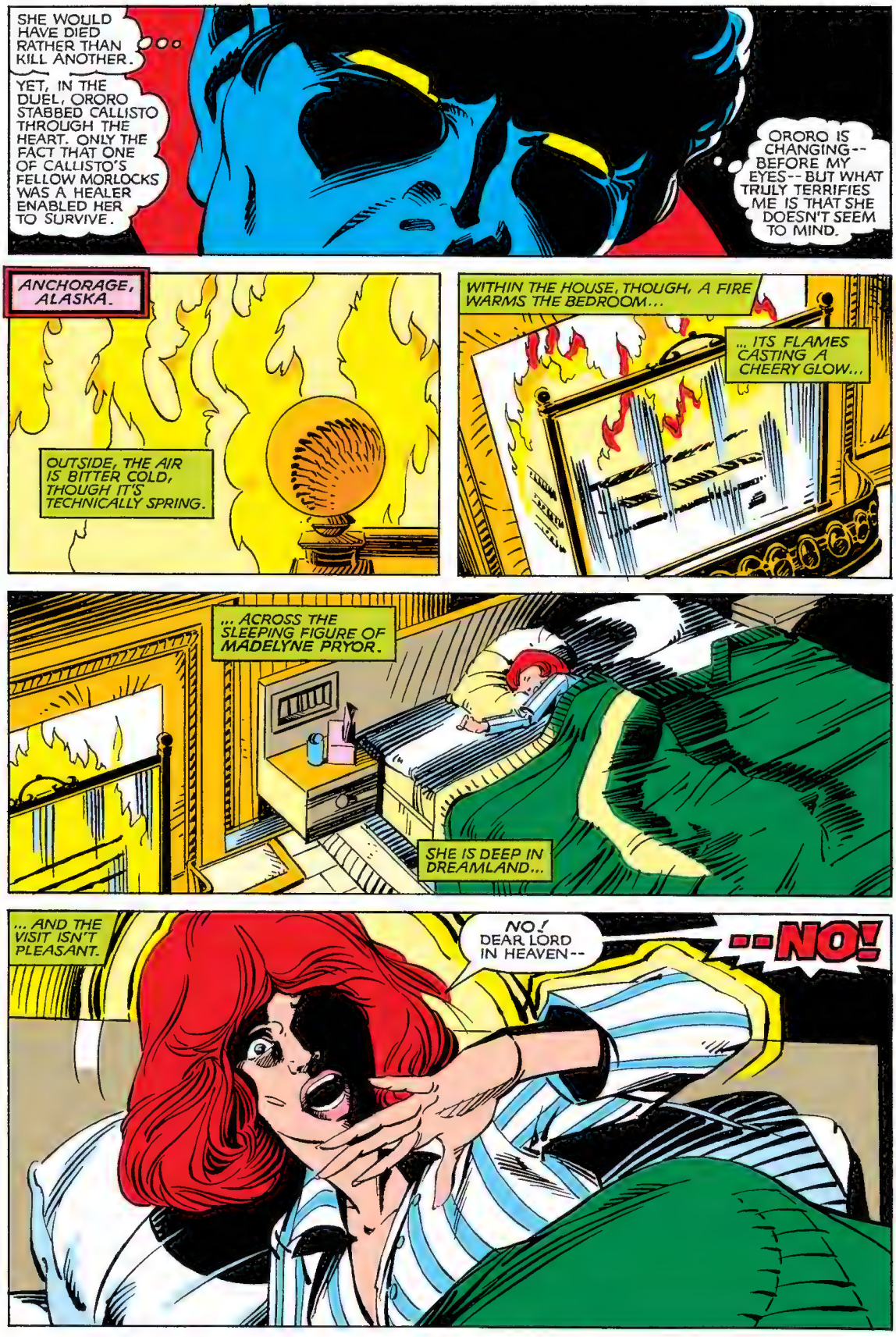

YOU WILL NOT ATTACK THEM-- FOR MONEY OR FOR SPORT--YOU WILL NOT STEAL THEIR CHILDREN TO SWELL YOUR RANKS, YOU WILL NOT KILL THEM!
THEY HUNT US! WE'RE MUTANTS, LIKE YOU, STORM--OUTCASTS-- HATED SIMPLY BECAUSE WE EXIST! WHY SHOULDN'T WE GIVE AS GOOD AS WE GET?!

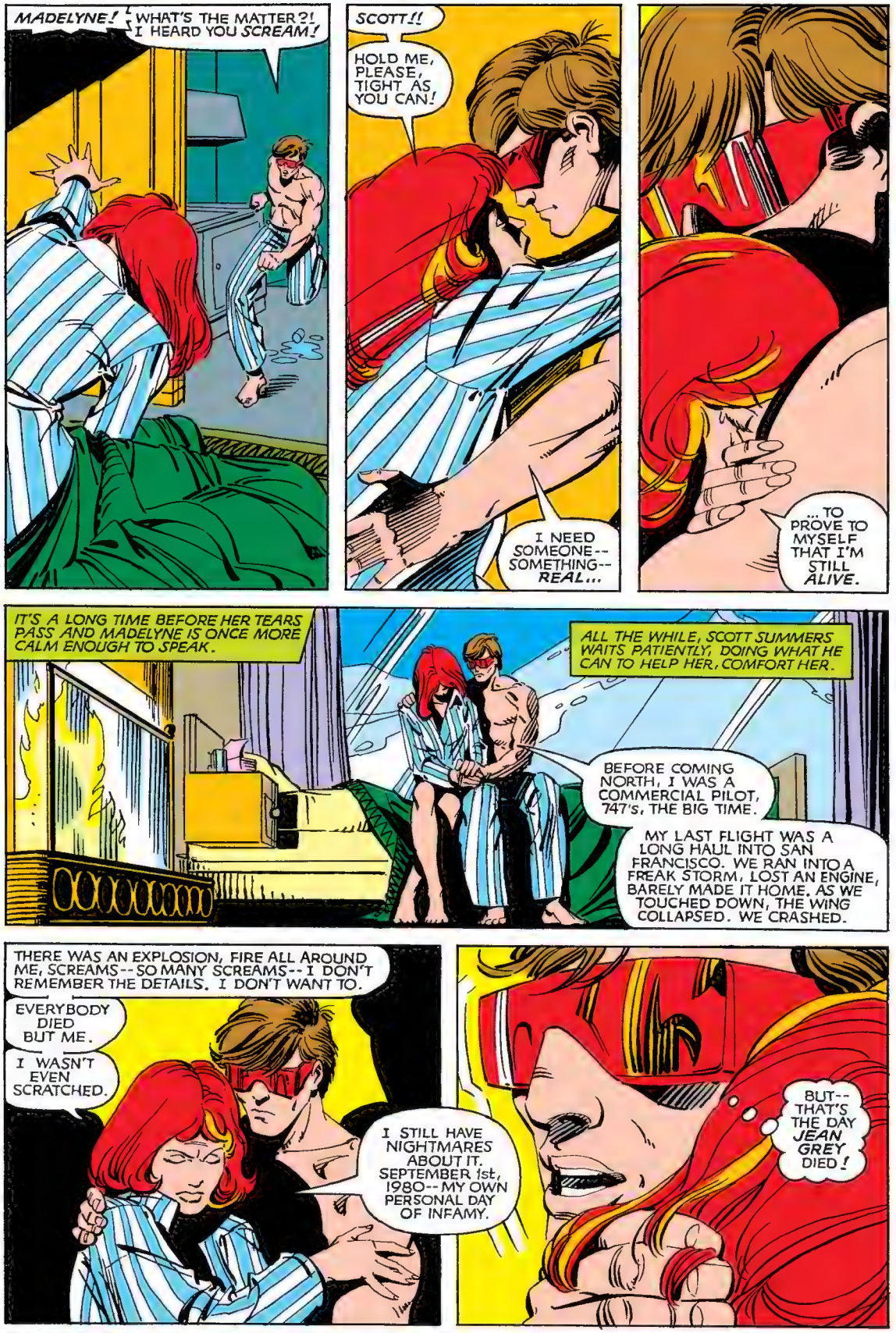
BECAUSE I FORBID IT.
ARE ANY HERE WILLING TO CHALLENGE ME?

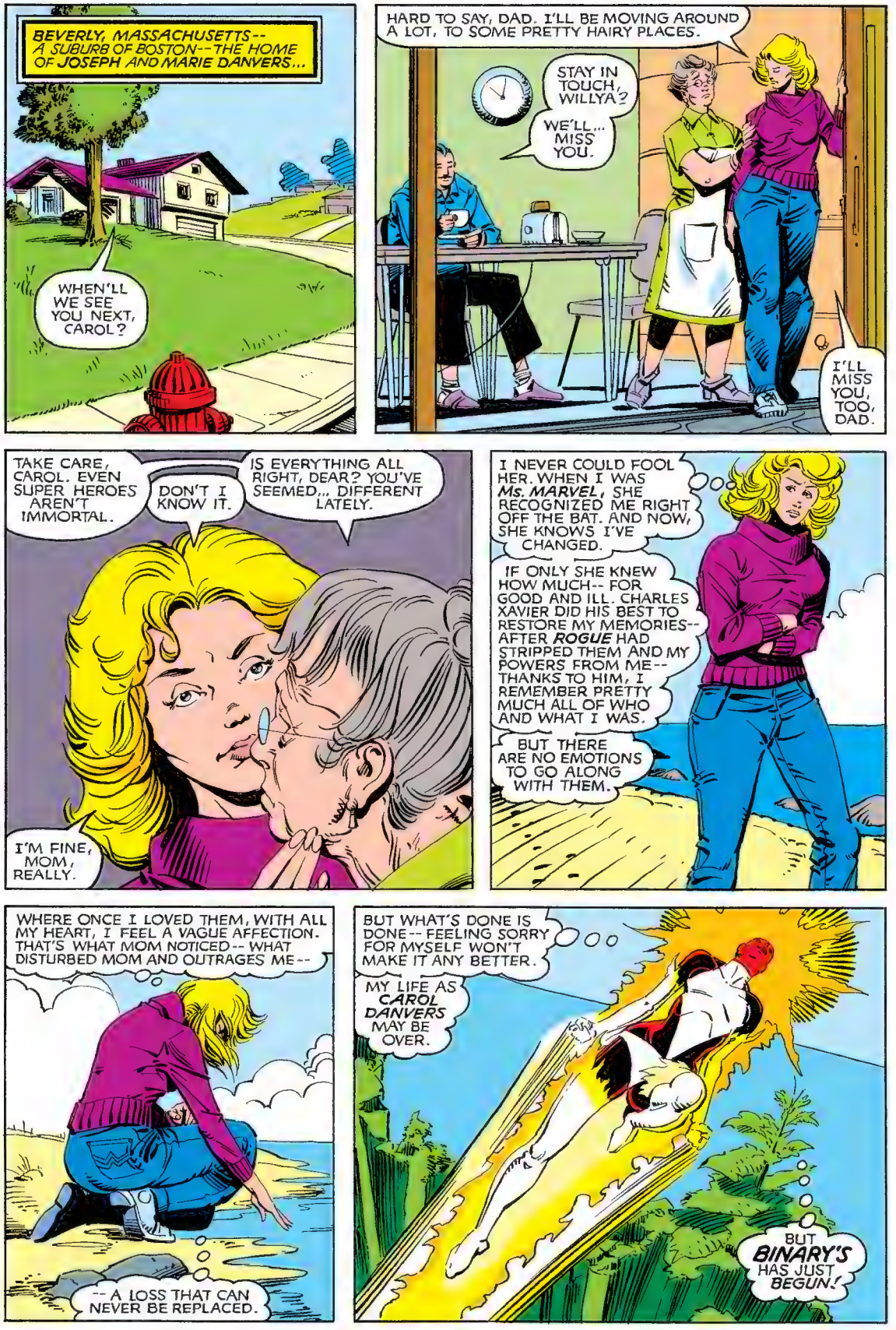
I THOUGHT NOT.
IF YOU WOULD HAVE PEACE AND A SECURE FUTURE, MORLOCKS, TRUST ME. DO AS I COMMAND.

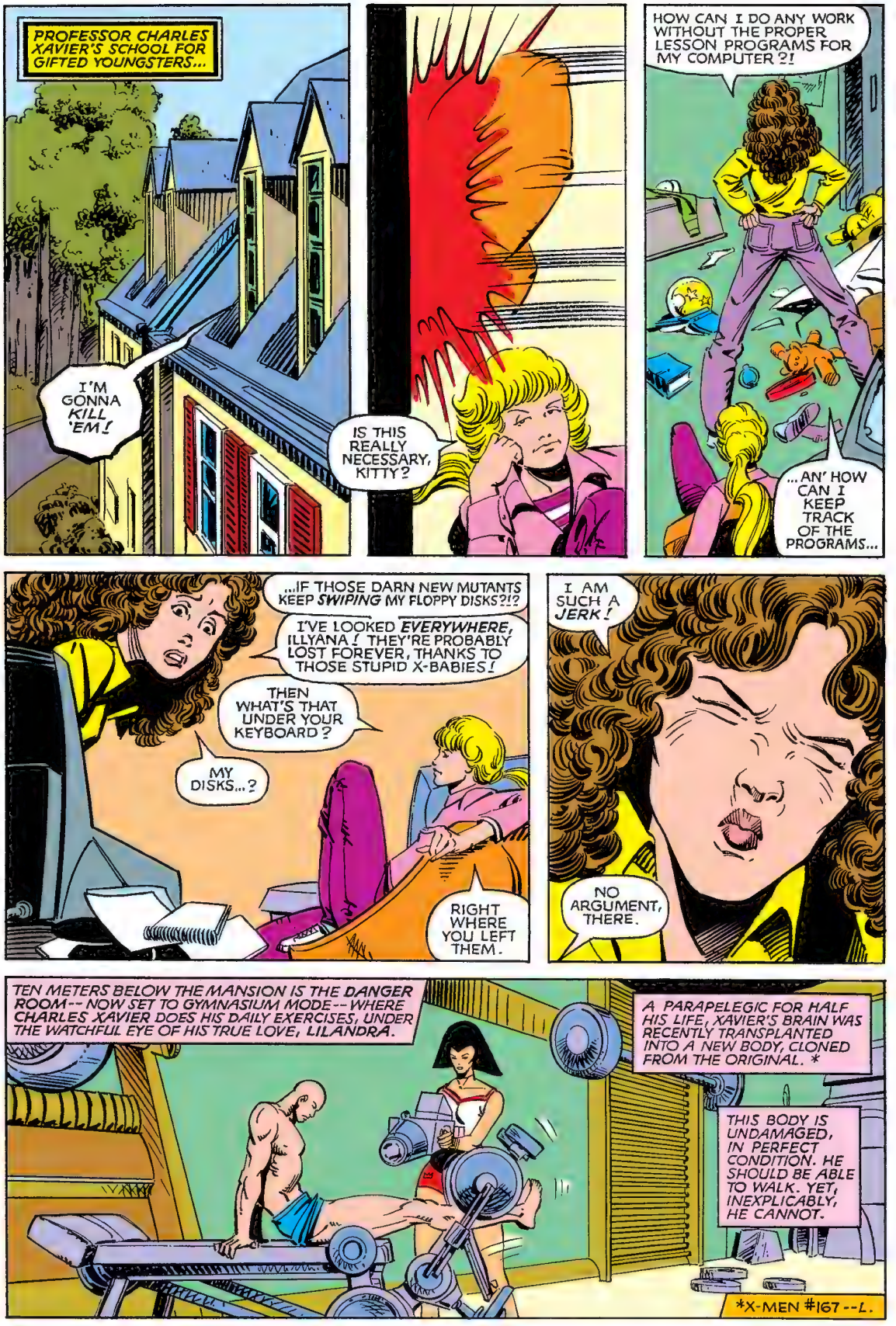

THE ALTERNATIVE IS TOO TERRIBLE TO CONTEMPLATE.

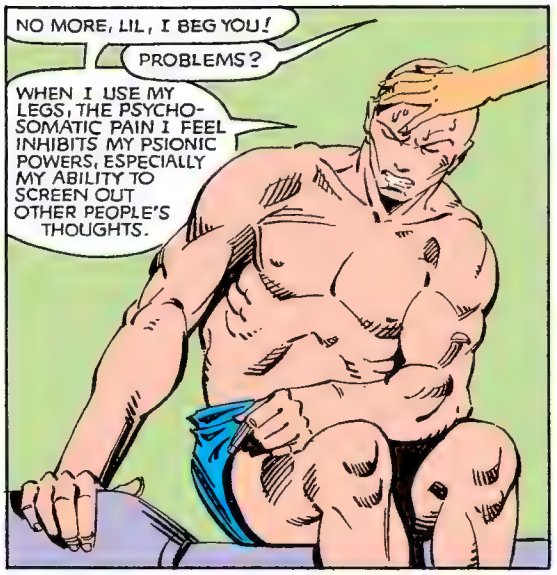
STORM!
YOU SHOULDN'T BE UP, CALLISTO. YOU'LL REOPEN YOUR WOUND.
ENJOY YOUR TRIUMPH WHILE YOU CAN, WIND-WITCH...
...BECAUSE I'M NOT DONE WITH YOU! I'LL HAVE MY RIGHTFUL PLACE AGAIN--
--I WILL LEAD THE MORLOCKS--AND I'LL HAVE YOUR HEART IN THE BARGAIN!
WE HAVE CROSSED KNIVES ONCE, LITTLE MUTANT.
DON'T PUSH YOUR LUCK.
SUNDER, PUT YOUR MISTRESS BACK TO BED.
AND THIS TIME, MAKE CERTAIN SHE STAYS THERE.
YOU SEEM TO BE GOING OUT OF YOUR WAY TO MAKE AN ENEMY OF CALLISTO.
WE WERE ENEMIES THE MOMENT WE MET, NIGHT-CRAWLER.
WE SHALL REMAIN SO 'TIL THE DAY WE DIE.
NOTHING I DO OR SAY WILL EVER CHANGE THAT.
PERHAPS. BUT THE ORORO I REMEMBER WOULD HAVE AT LEAST TRIED.

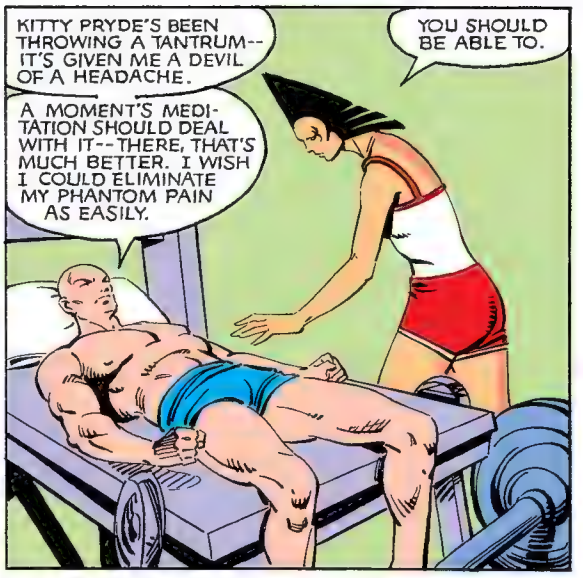

SHE WOULD HAVE DIED RATHER THAN KILL ANOTHER...
YET, IN THE DUEL, ORORO STABBED CALLISTO THROUGH THE HEART. ONLY THE FACT THAT ONE OF CALLISTO'S FELLOW MORLOCKS WAS A HEALER ENABLED HER TO SURVIVE.
ORORO IS CHANGING-- BEFORE MY EYES-- BUT WHAT TRULY TERRIFIES ME IS THAT SHE DOESN'T SEEM TO MIND.
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA.
OUTSIDE, THE AIR IS BITTER COLD, THOUGH IT'S TECHNICALLY SPRING.
WITHIN THE HOUSE, THOUGH, A FIRE WARMS THE BEDROOM...
... ITS FLAMES CASTING A CHEERY GLOW...
... ACROSS THE SLEEPING FIGURE OF MADELYNE PRYOR.
SHE IS DEEP IN DREAMLAND...
... AND THE VISIT ISN'T PLEASANT.
NO! DEAR LORD IN HEAVEN--
--NO!

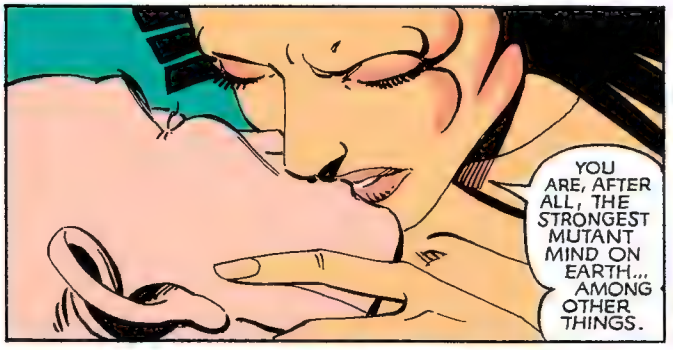

MADELYNE!
WHAT'S THE MATTER?! I HEARD YOU SCREAM!
SCOTT!!
HOLD ME, PLEASE, TIGHT AS YOU CAN!
I NEED SOMEONE-- SOMETHING-- REAL...
... TO PROVE TO MYSELF THAT I'M STILL ALIVE.
IT'S A LONG TIME BEFORE HER TEARS PASS AND MADELYNE IS ONCE MORE CALM ENOUGH TO SPEAK.
ALL THE WHILE, SCOTT SUMMERS WAITS PATIENTLY, DOING WHAT HE CAN TO HELP HER, COMFORT HER.
BEFORE COMING NORTH, I WAS A COMMERCIAL PILOT, 747's, THE BIG TIME.
MY LAST FLIGHT WAS A LONG HAUL INTO SAN FRANCISCO. WE RAN INTO A FREAK STORM, LOST AN ENGINE, BARELY MADE IT HOME. AS WE TOUCHED DOWN, THE WING COLLAPSED. WE CRASHED.
THERE WAS AN EXPLOSION, FIRE ALL AROUND ME, SCREAMS--SO MANY SCREAMS--I DON'T REMEMBER THE DETAILS. I DON'T WANT TO.
EVERYBODY DIED BUT ME.
I WASN'T EVEN SCRATCHED.
I STILL HAVE NIGHTMARES ABOUT IT. SEPTEMBER 1st, 1980--MY OWN PERSONAL DAY OF INFAMY.
BUT-- THAT'S THE DAY JEAN GREY DIED!

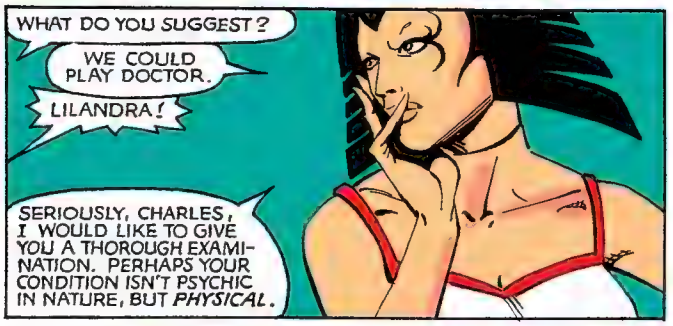

BEVERLY, MASSACHUSETTS-- A SUBURB OF BOSTON--THE HOME OF JOSEPH AND MARIE DANVERS...
WHEN'LL WE SEE YOU NEXT, CAROL?
HARD TO SAY, DAD. I'LL BE MOVING AROUND A LOT, TO SOME PRETTY HAIRY PLACES.
STAY IN TOUCH, WILLYA?
WE'LL... MISS YOU.
I'LL MISS YOU, TOO, DAD.
TAKE CARE, CAROL. EVEN SUPER HEROES AREN'T IMMORTAL.
DON'T I KNOW IT.
IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT, DEAR? YOU'VE SEEMED... DIFFERENT LATELY.
I'M FINE, MOM, REALLY.
I NEVER COULD FOOL HER. WHEN I WAS Ms. MARVEL, SHE RECOGNIZED ME RIGHT OFF THE BAT. AND NOW, SHE KNOWS I'VE CHANGED.
IF ONLY SHE KNEW HOW MUCH-- FOR GOOD AND ILL. CHARLES XAVIER DID HIS BEST TO RESTORE MY MEMORIES-- AFTER ROGUE HAD STRIPPED THEM AND MY POWERS FROM ME-- THANKS TO HIM, I REMEMBER PRETTY MUCH ALL OF WHO AND WHAT I WAS.
BUT THERE ARE NO EMOTIONS TO GO ALONG WITH THEM.
WHERE ONCE I LOVED THEM, WITH ALL MY HEART, I FEEL A VAGUE AFFECTION. THAT'S WHAT MOM NOTICED-- WHAT DISTURBED MOM AND OUTRAGES ME--
-- A LOSS THAT CAN NEVER BE REPLACED.
BUT WHAT'S DONE IS DONE-- FEELING SORRY FOR MYSELF WON'T MAKE IT ANY BETTER.
MY LIFE AS CAROL DANVERS MAY BE OVER.
BUT BINARY'S HAS JUST BEGUN!


PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS...
I'M GONNA KILL 'EM!
IS THIS REALLY NECESSARY, KITTY?
HOW CAN I DO ANY WORK WITHOUT THE PROPER LESSON PROGRAMS FOR MY COMPUTER?!
...AN' HOW CAN I KEEP TRACK OF THE PROGRAMS...
...IF THOSE DARN NEW MUTANTS KEEP SWIPING MY FLOPPY DISKS?!?
I'VE LOOKED EVERYWHERE, ILLYANA! THEY'RE PROBABLY LOST FOREVER, THANKS TO THOSE STUPID X-BABIES!
THEN WHAT'S THAT UNDER YOUR KEYBOARD?
MY DISKS...?
RIGHT WHERE YOU LEFT THEM.
I AM SUCH A JERK!
NO ARGUMENT, THERE.
TEN METERS BELOW THE MANSION IS THE DANGER ROOM-- NOW SET TO GYMNASIUM MODE-- WHERE CHARLES XAVIER DOES HIS DAILY EXERCISES, UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYE OF HIS TRUE LOVE, LILANDRA.
A PARAPELEGIC FOR HALF HIS LIFE, XAVIER'S BRAIN WAS RECENTLY TRANSPLANTED INTO A NEW BODY, CLONED FROM THE ORIGINAL. *
THIS BODY IS UNDAMAGED, IN PERFECT CONDITION. HE SHOULD BE ABLE TO WALK. YET, INEXPLICABLY, HE CANNOT.
*X-MEN #167 --L.

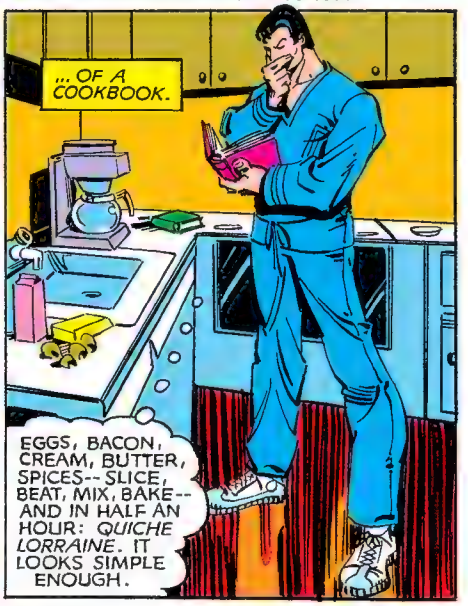

NO MORE, LIL, I BEG YOU!
PROBLEMS?
WHEN I USE MY LEGS, THE PSYCHO-SOMATIC PAIN I FEEL INHIBITS MY PSIONIC POWERS, ESPECIALLY MY ABILITY TO SCREEN OUT OTHER PEOPLE'S THOUGHTS.

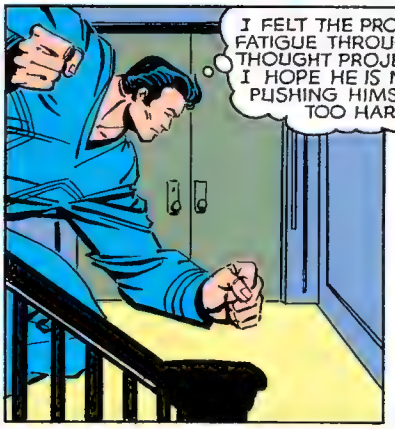

KITTY PRYDE'S BEEN THROWING A TANTRUM--IT'S GIVEN ME A DEVIL OF A HEADACHE.
A MOMENT'S MEDITATION SHOULD DEAL WITH IT--THERE, THAT'S MUCH BETTER. I WISH I COULD ELIMINATE MY PHANTOM PAIN AS EASILY.
YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO.

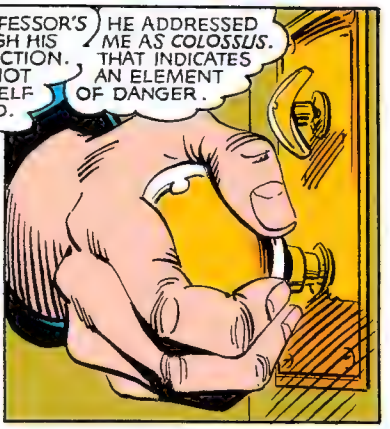


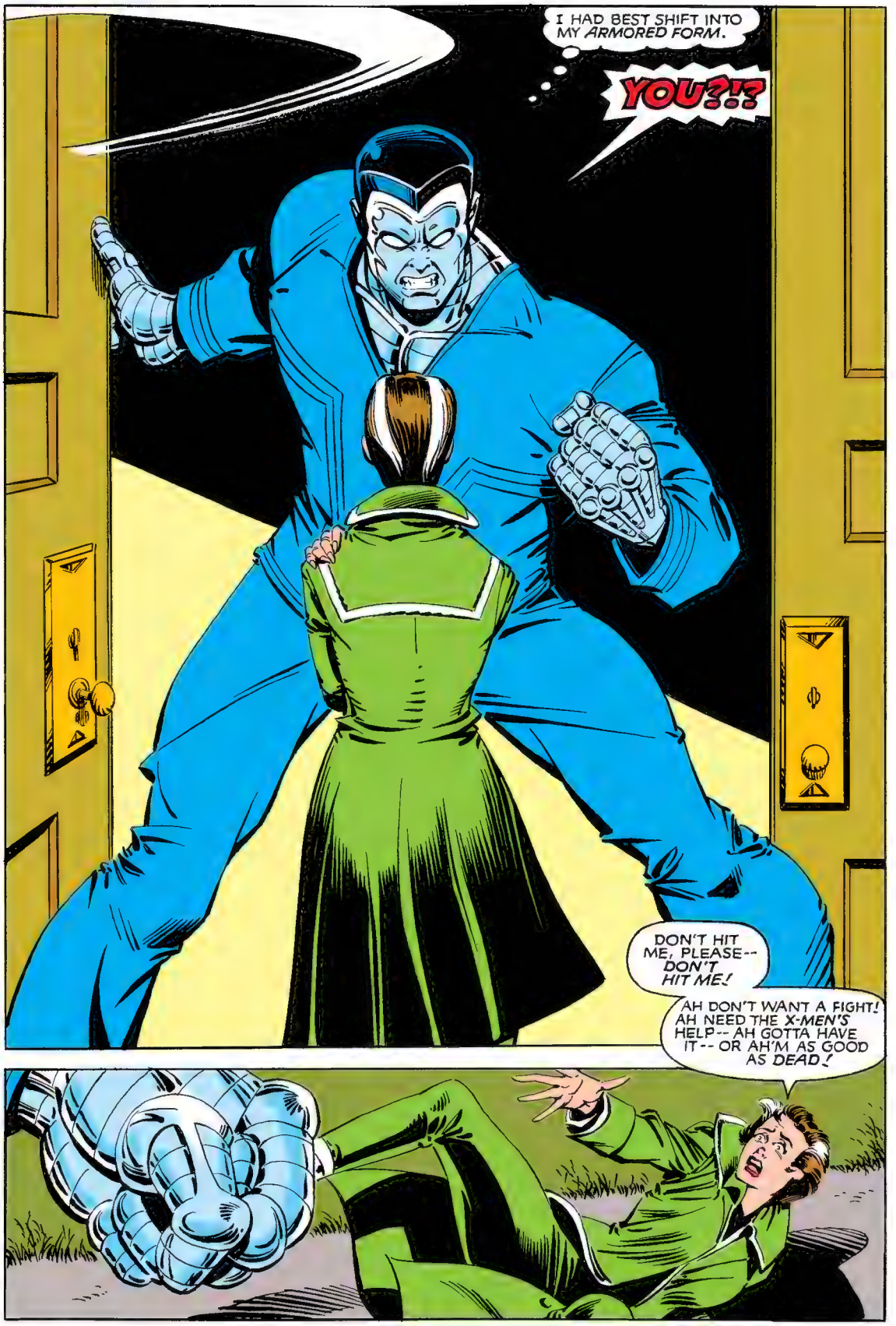

WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST?
WE COULD PLAY DOCTOR.
LILANDRA!
SERIOUSLY, CHARLES, I WOULD LIKE TO GIVE YOU A THOROUGH EXAMINATION. PERHAPS YOUR CONDITION ISN'T PSYCHIC IN NATURE, BUT *PHYSICAL*.

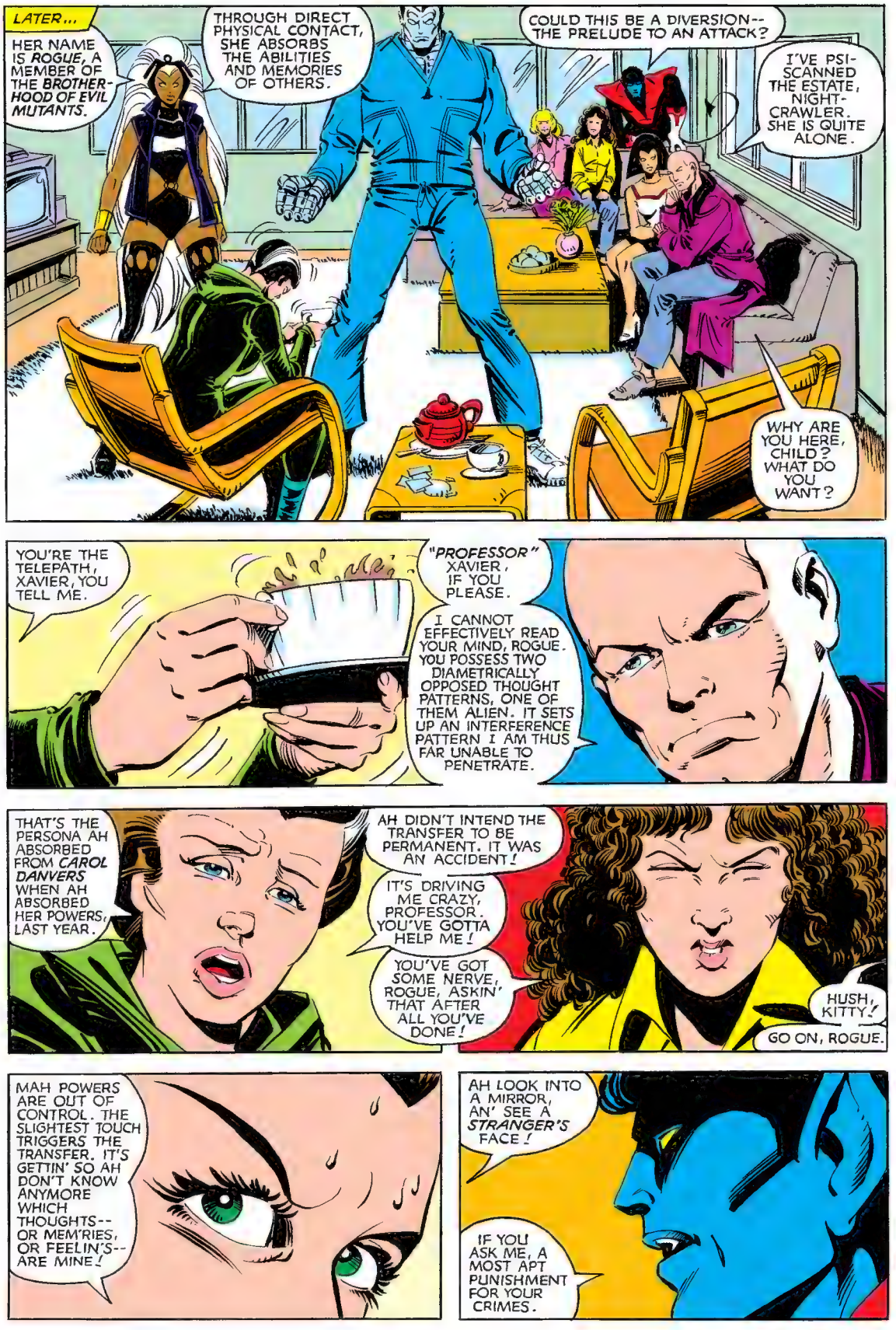
UPSTAIRS, IN THE KITCHEN, ANOTHER OF XAVIER'S STUDENTS, PIOTR NIKOLIEVITCH RASPUTIN, PONDERS THE COMPLEX MYSTERIES AND INHERENT CONTRADICTIONS...

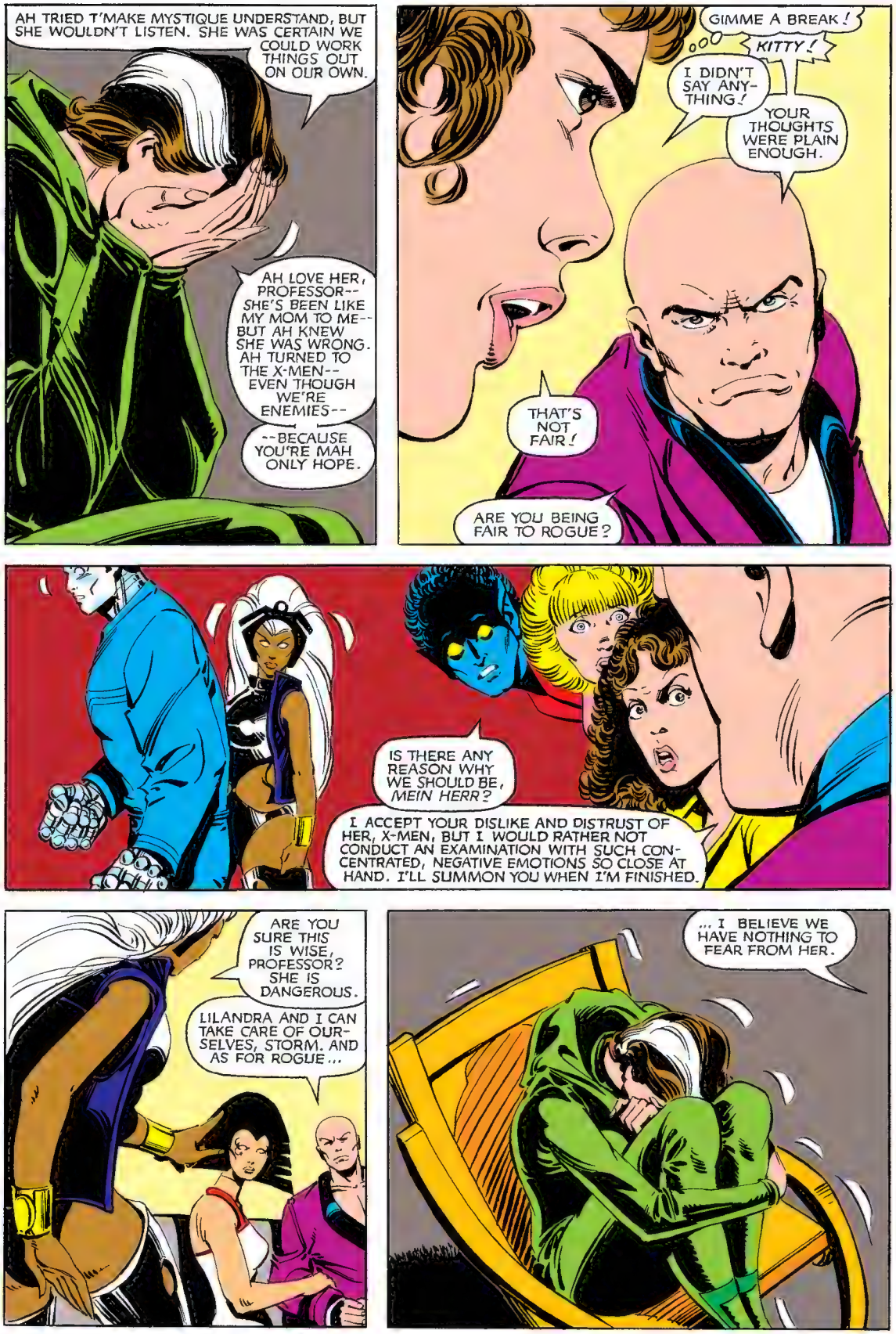

... OF A COOKBOOK.
EGGS, BACON, CREAM, BUTTER, SPICES--SLICE, BEAT, MIX, BAKE--AND IN HALF AN HOUR: *QUICHE LORRAINE*. IT LOOKS SIMPLE ENOUGH.

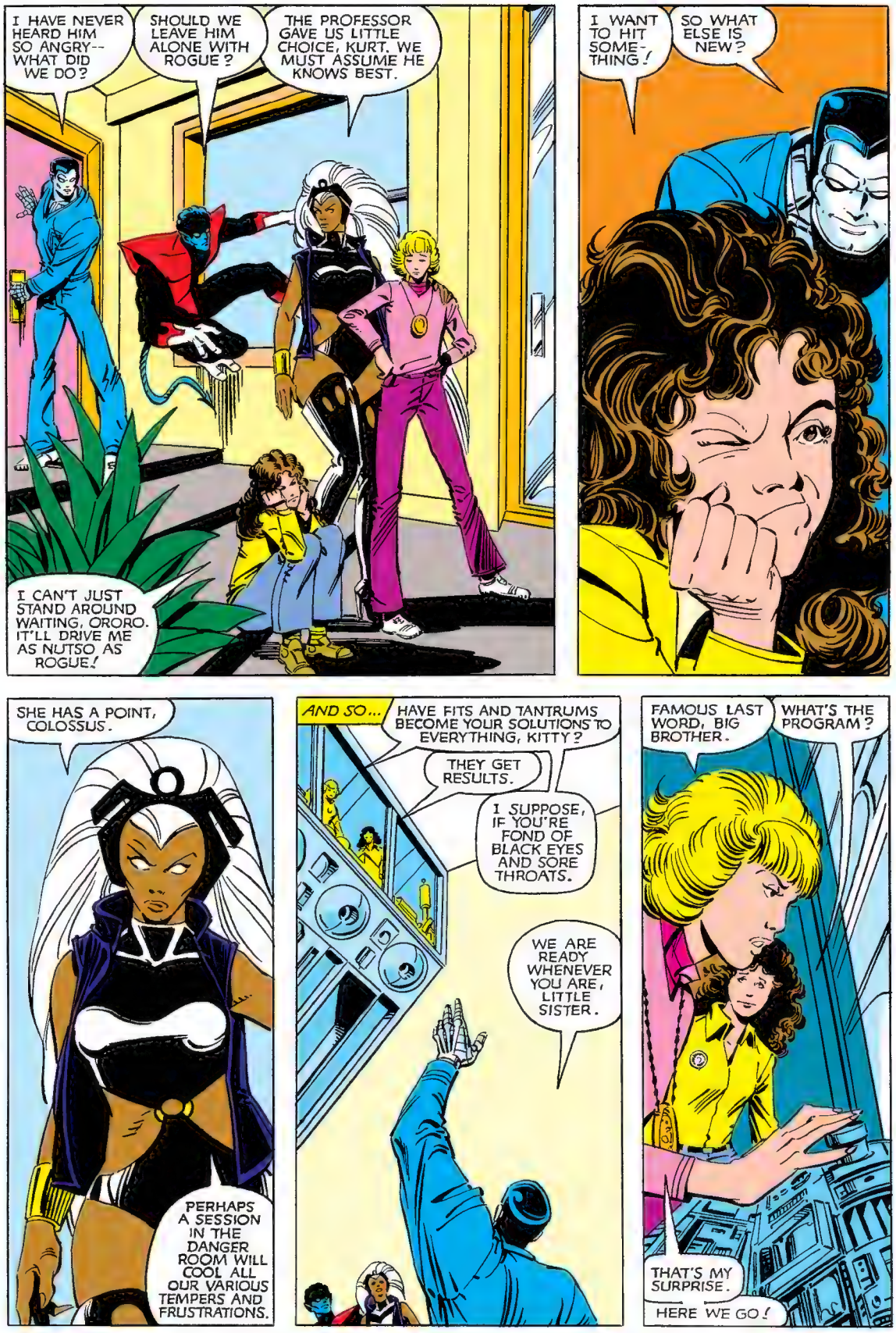


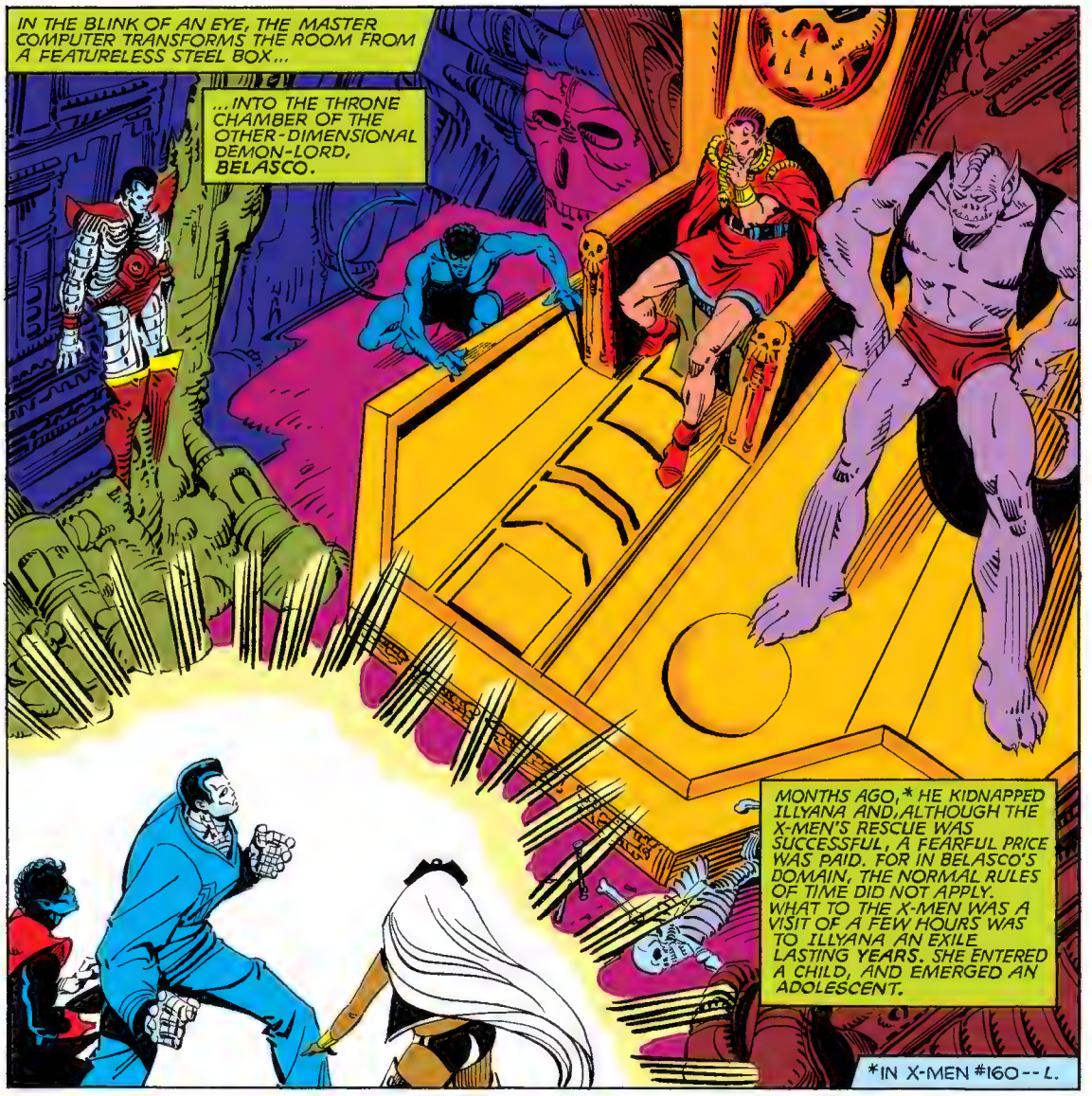


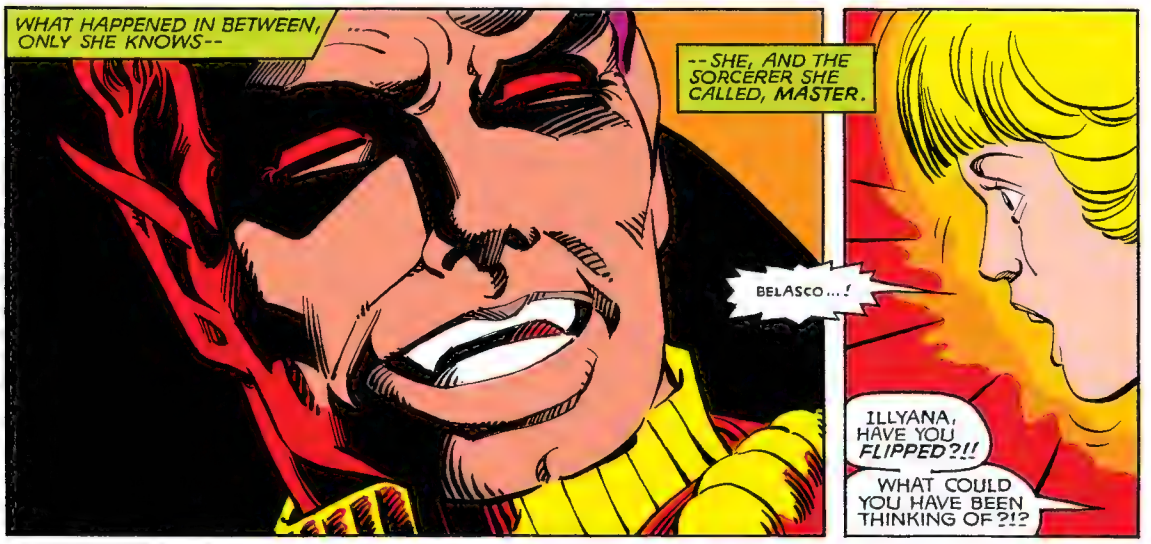

I HAD BEST SHIFT INTO MY ARMORED FORM.
YOU?!?
DON'T HIT ME, PLEASE-- DON'T HIT ME!
AH DON'T WANT A FIGHT! AH NEED THE X-MEN'S HELP-- AH GOTTA HAVE IT-- OR AH'M AS GOOD AS DEAD!

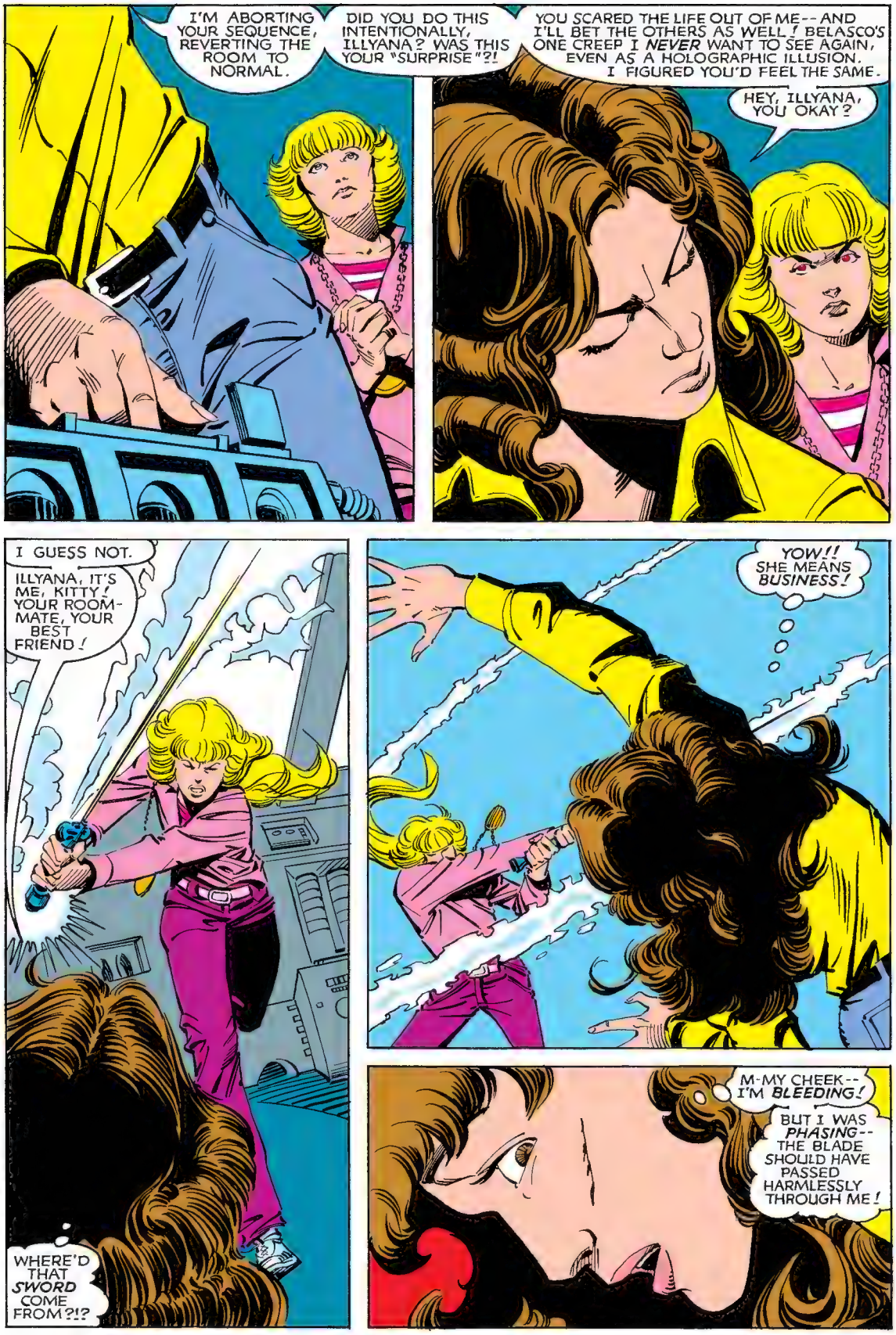

LATER...
HER NAME IS ROGUE, A MEMBER OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS.
THROUGH DIRECT PHYSICAL CONTACT, SHE ABSORBS THE ABILITIES AND MEMORIES OF OTHERS.
COULD THIS BE A DIVERSION--THE PRELUDE TO AN ATTACK?
I'VE PSI-SCANNED THE ESTATE, NIGHTCRAWLER. SHE IS QUITE ALONE.
WHY ARE YOU HERE, CHILD? WHAT DO YOU WANT?
YOU'RE THE TELEPATH, XAVIER, YOU TELL ME.
"PROFESSOR" XAVIER, IF YOU PLEASE.
I CANNOT EFFECTIVELY READ YOUR MIND, ROGUE. YOU POSSESS TWO DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED THOUGHT PATTERNS, ONE OF THEM ALIEN. IT SETS UP AN INTERFERENCE PATTERN I AM THUS FAR UNABLE TO PENETRATE.
THAT'S THE PERSONA AH ABSORBED FROM CAROL DANVERS WHEN AH ABSORBED HER POWERS, LAST YEAR.
AH DIDN'T INTEND THE TRANSFER TO BE PERMANENT. IT WAS AN ACCIDENT!
IT'S DRIVING ME CRAZY, PROFESSOR. YOU'VE GOTTA HELP ME!
YOU'VE GOT SOME NERVE, ROGUE, ASKIN' THAT AFTER ALL YOU'VE DONE!
HUSH, KITTY!
GO ON, ROGUE.
MAH POWERS ARE OUT OF CONTROL. THE SLIGHTEST TOUCH TRIGGERS THE TRANSFER. IT'S GETTIN' SO AH DON'T KNOW ANYMORE WHICH THOUGHTS--OR MEM'RIES, OR FEELIN'S--ARE MINE!
AH LOOK INTO A MIRROR, AN' SEE A STRANGER'S FACE!
IF YOU ASK ME, A MOST APT PUNISHMENT FOR YOUR CRIMES.

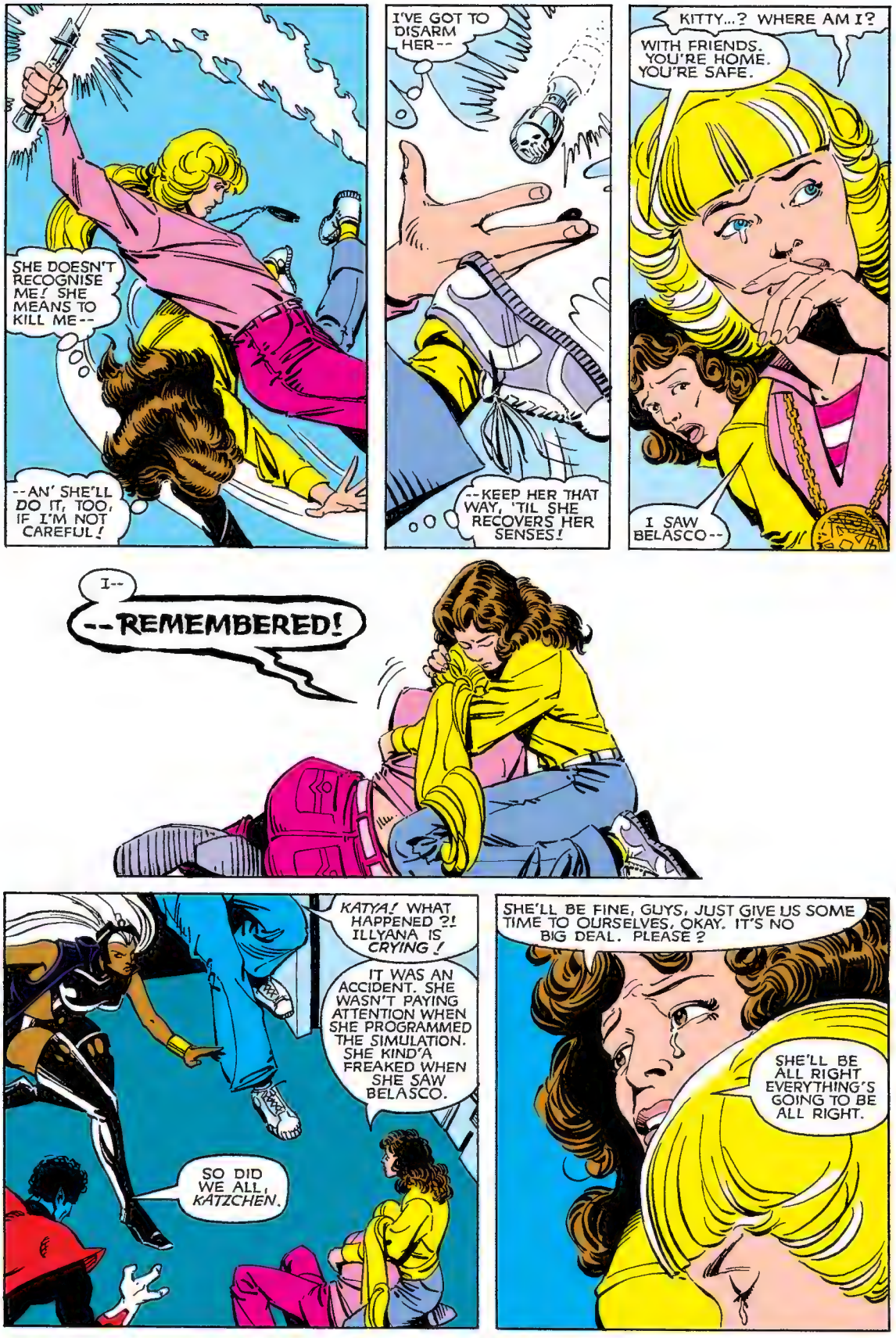

AH TRIED T'MAKE MYSTIQUE UNDERSTAND, BUT SHE WOULDN'T LISTEN. SHE WAS CERTAIN WE COULD WORK THINGS OUT ON OUR OWN.
AH LOVE HER, PROFESSOR-- SHE'S BEEN LIKE MY MOM TO ME-- BUT AH KNEW SHE WAS WRONG. AH TURNED TO THE X-MEN-- EVEN THOUGH WE'RE ENEMIES--
--BECAUSE YOU'RE MAH ONLY HOPE.
GIMME A BREAK!
KITTY!
I DIDN'T SAY ANY-THING!
YOUR THOUGHTS WERE PLAIN ENOUGH.
THAT'S NOT FAIR!
ARE YOU BEING FAIR TO ROGUE?
IS THERE ANY REASON WHY WE SHOULD BE, MEIN HERR?
I ACCEPT YOUR DISLIKE AND DISTRUST OF HER, X-MEN, BUT I WOULD RATHER NOT CONDUCT AN EXAMINATION WITH SUCH CONCENTRATED, NEGATIVE EMOTIONS SO CLOSE AT HAND. I'LL SUMMON YOU WHEN I'M FINISHED.
ARE YOU SURE THIS IS WISE, PROFESSOR? SHE IS DANGEROUS.
LILANDRA AND I CAN TAKE CARE OF OURSELVES, STORM. AND AS FOR ROGUE...
... I BELIEVE WE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM HER.

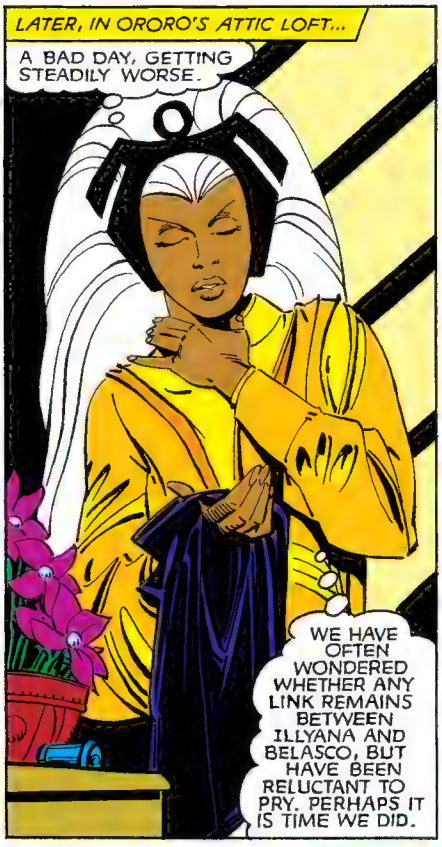

I HAVE NEVER HEARD HIM SO ANGRY-- WHAT DID WE DO?
SHOULD WE LEAVE HIM ALONE WITH ROGUE?
THE PROFESSOR GAVE US LITTLE CHOICE, KURT. WE MUST ASSUME HE KNOWS BEST.
I CAN'T JUST STAND AROUND WAITING, ORORO. IT'LL DRIVE ME AS NUTSO AS ROGUE!
I WANT TO HIT SOME-THING!
SO WHAT ELSE IS NEW?
SHE HAS A POINT, COLOSSUS.
PERHAPS A SESSION IN THE DANGER ROOM WILL COOL ALL OUR VARIOUS TEMPERS AND FRUSTRATIONS.
AND SO...
HAVE FITS AND TANTRUMS BECOME YOUR SOLUTIONS TO EVERYTHING, KITTY?
THEY GET RESULTS.
I SUPPOSE, IF YOU'RE FOND OF BLACK EYES AND SORE THROATS.
WE ARE READY WHENEVER YOU ARE, LITTLE SISTER.
FAMOUS LAST WORD, BIG BROTHER.
WHAT'S THE PROGRAM?
THAT'S MY SURPRISE.
HERE WE GO!

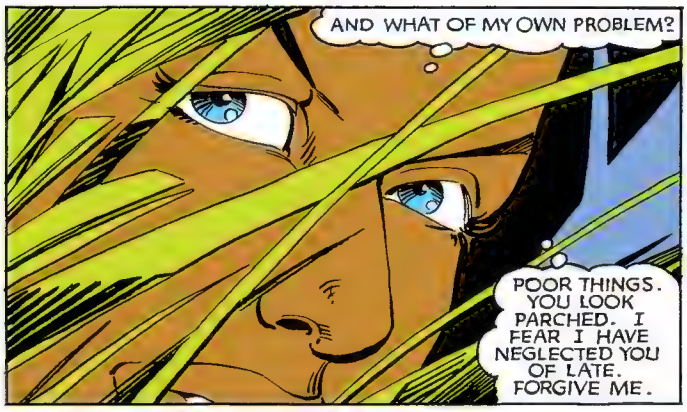

IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, THE MASTER COMPUTER TRANSFORMS THE ROOM FROM A FEATURELESS STEEL BOX...
...INTO THE THRONE CHAMBER OF THE OTHER-DIMENSIONAL DEMON-LORD, BELASCO.
MONTHS AGO,* HE KIDNAPPED ILLYANA AND, ALTHOUGH THE X-MEN'S RESCUE WAS SUCCESSFUL, A FEARFUL PRICE WAS PAID. FOR IN BELASCO'S DOMAIN, THE NORMAL RULES OF TIME DID NOT APPLY. WHAT TO THE X-MEN WAS A VISIT OF A FEW HOURS WAS TO ILLYANA AN EXILE LASTING YEARS. SHE ENTERED A CHILD, AND EMERGED AN ADOLESCENT.
*IN X-MEN #160 -- L.

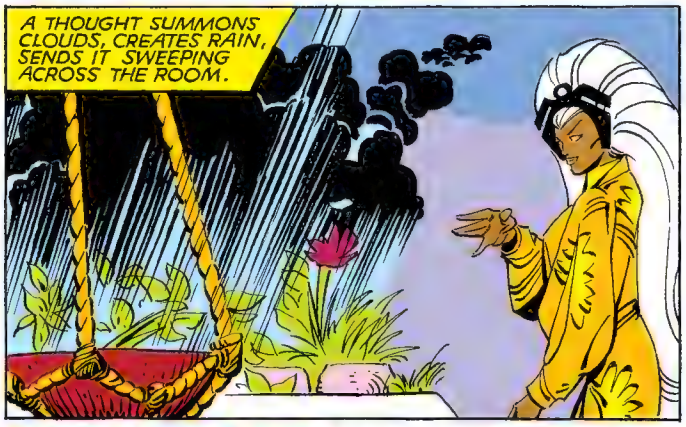

WHAT HAPPENED IN BETWEEN, ONLY SHE KNOWS--
...
--SHE, AND THE SORCERER SHE CALLED, MASTER.
BELASCO...!
ILLYANA, HAVE YOU FLIPPED?!!
WHAT COULD YOU HAVE BEEN THINKING OF?!?


I'M ABORTING YOUR SEQUENCE, REVERTING THE ROOM TO NORMAL.
DID YOU DO THIS INTENTIONALLY, ILLYANA? WAS THIS YOUR "SURPRISE"?!
YOU SCARED THE LIFE OUT OF ME--AND I'LL BET THE OTHERS AS WELL! BELASCO'S ONE CREEP I NEVER WANT TO SEE AGAIN, EVEN AS A HOLOGRAPHIC ILLUSION. I FIGURED YOU'D FEEL THE SAME.
HEY, ILLYANA, YOU OKAY?
I GUESS NOT.
ILLYANA, IT'S ME, KITTY! YOUR ROOM-MATE, YOUR BEST FRIEND!
WHERE'D THAT SWORD COME FROM?!?
YOW!! SHE MEANS BUSINESS!
M-MY CHEEK-- I'M BLEEDING!
BUT I WAS PHASING-- THE BLADE SHOULD HAVE PASSED HARMLESSLY THROUGH ME!


SHE DOESN'T RECOGNISE ME! SHE MEANS TO KILL ME--
--AN' SHE'LL DO IT, TOO, IF I'M NOT CAREFUL!
I'VE GOT TO DISARM HER--
--KEEP HER THAT WAY, 'TIL SHE RECOVERS HER SENSES!
KITTY...? WHERE AM I?
WITH FRIENDS. YOU'RE HOME. YOU'RE SAFE.
I SAW BELASCO--
I--
--REMEMBERED!
KATYA! WHAT HAPPENED ?! ILLYANA IS CRYING!
IT WAS AN ACCIDENT. SHE WASN'T PAYING ATTENTION WHEN SHE PROGRAMMED THE SIMULATION. SHE KIND'A FREAKED WHEN SHE SAW BELASCO.
SO DID WE ALL, KATZCHEN.
SHE'LL BE FINE, GUYS, JUST GIVE US SOME TIME TO OURSELVES, OKAY. IT'S NO BIG DEAL. PLEASE?
SHE'LL BE ALL RIGHT EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.


LATER, IN ORORO'S ATTIC LOFT...
A BAD DAY, GETTING STEADILY WORSE.
WE HAVE OFTEN WONDERED WHETHER ANY LINK REMAINS BETWEEN ILLYANA AND BELASCO, BUT HAVE BEEN RELUCTANT TO PRY. PERHAPS IT IS TIME WE DID.

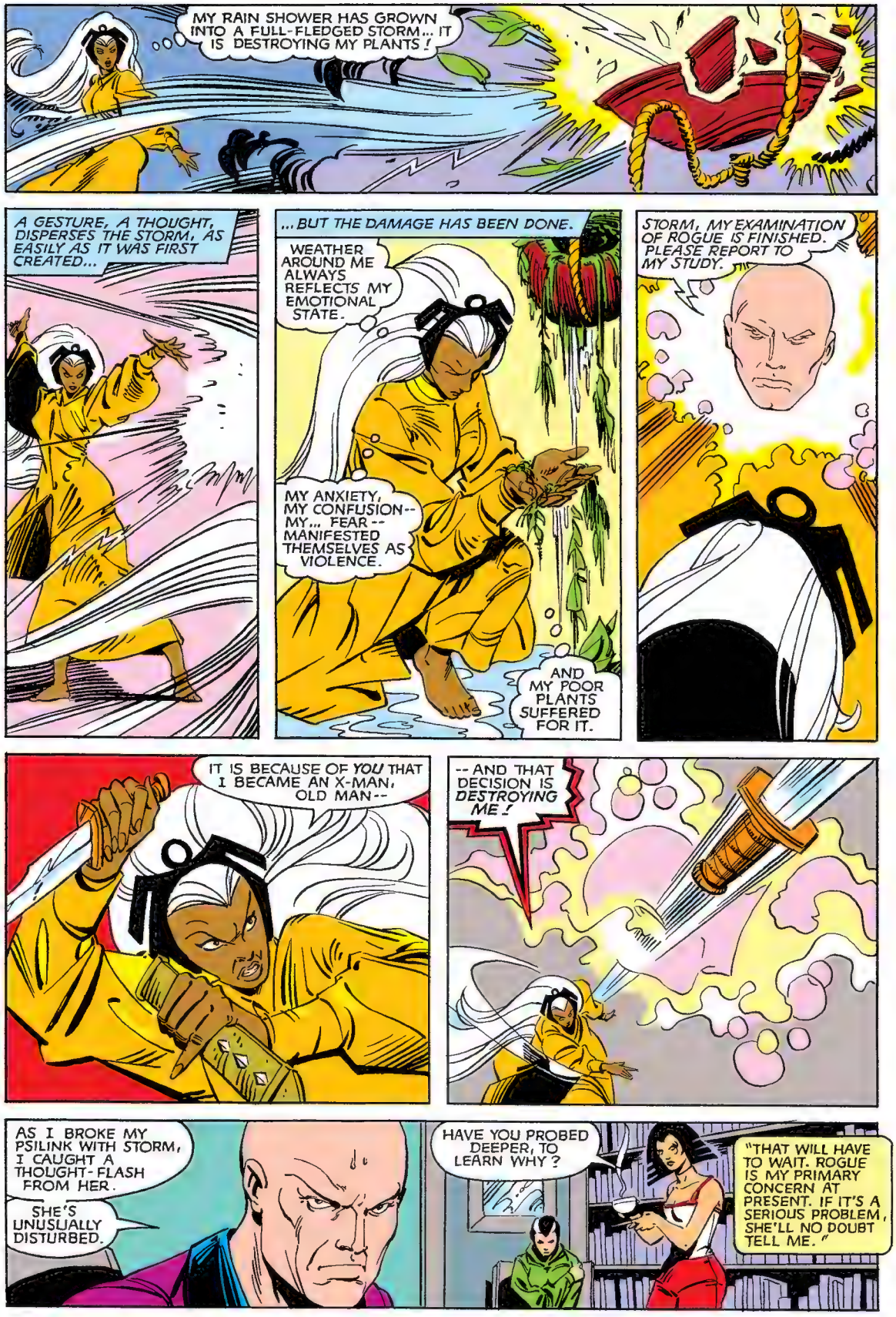

AND WHAT OF MY OWN PROBLEM?
POOR THINGS. YOU LOOK PARCHED. I FEAR I HAVE NEGLECTED YOU OF LATE. FORGIVE ME.

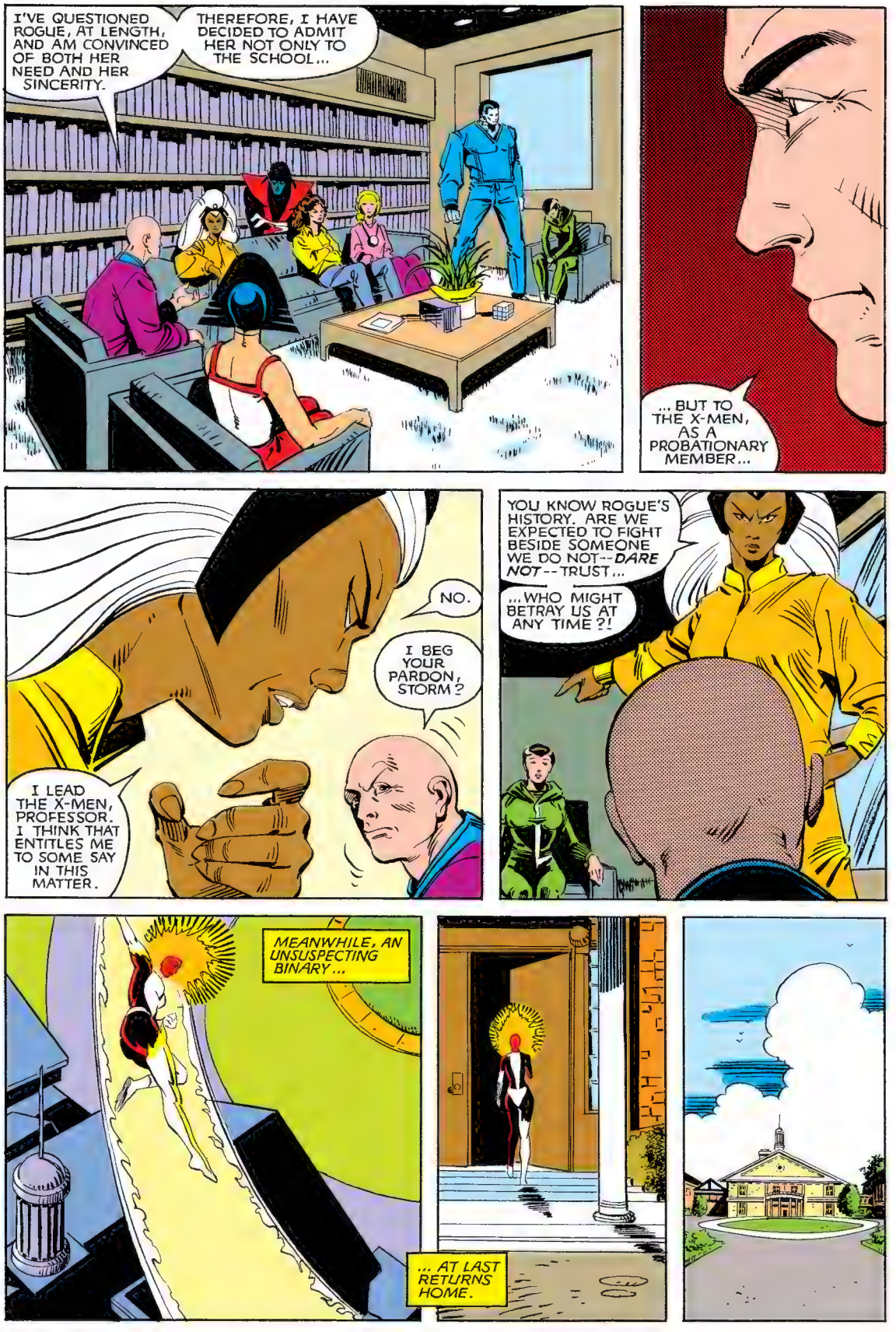

A THOUGHT SUMMONS CLOUDS, CREATES RAIN, SENDS IT SWEEPING ACROSS THE ROOM.

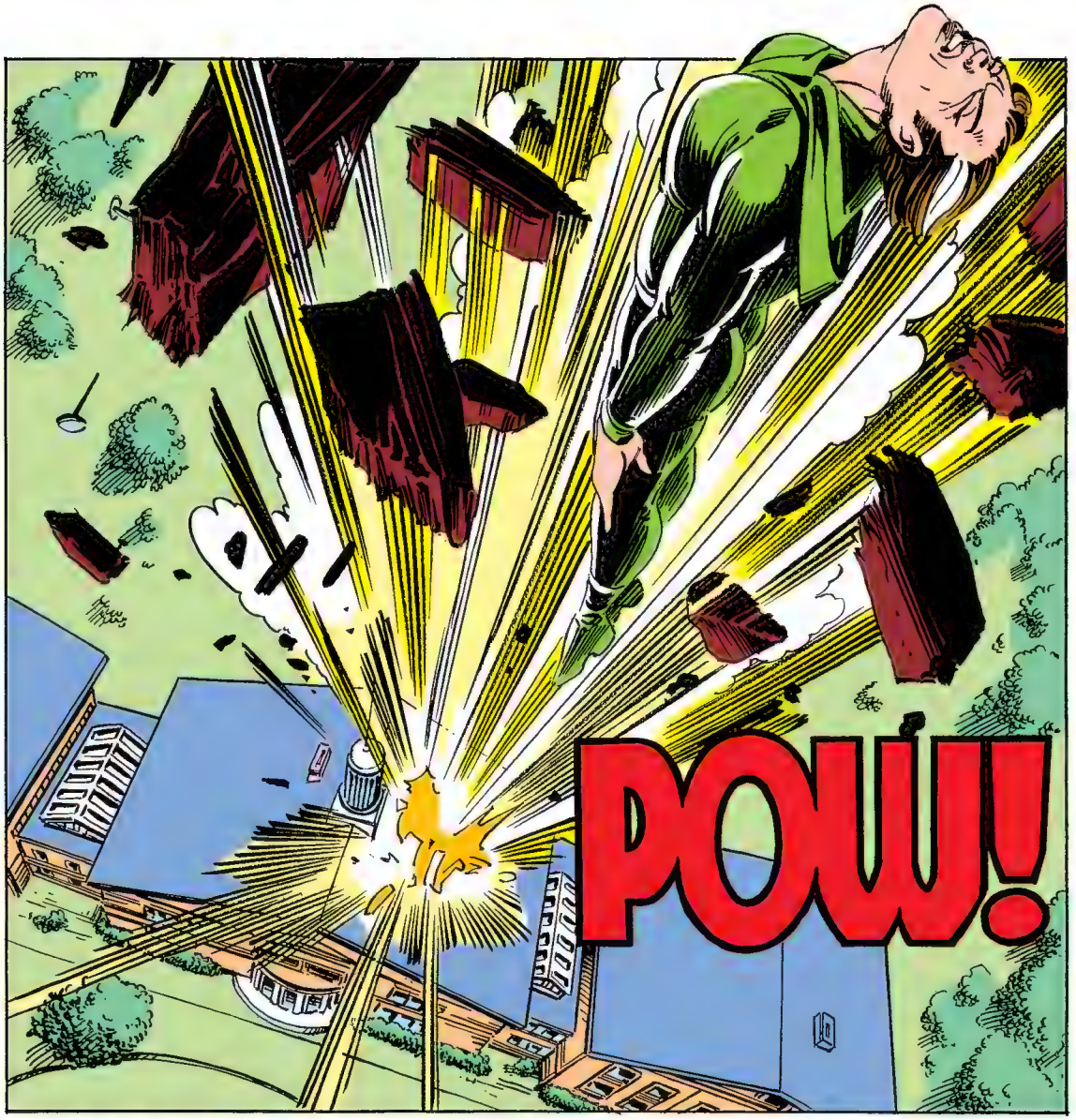
I WISH I COULD CONTROL MY LIFE-- MY DESTINY-- AS EASILY AS I DO THE WEATHER. I CANNOT BELIEVE THE THINGS I HAVE DONE. THE DUEL-- THIS MORNING'S CONFRONTATION WITH CALLISTO-- THEY ALL FLY IN THE FACE OF ALL I HAVE EVER BELIEVED ABOUT MYSELF.
AND YET, THIS SAME INNER METAMORPHOSIS SEEMS TO BE MAKING ME A BETTER LEADER OF THE X-MEN. IS THAT BAD?

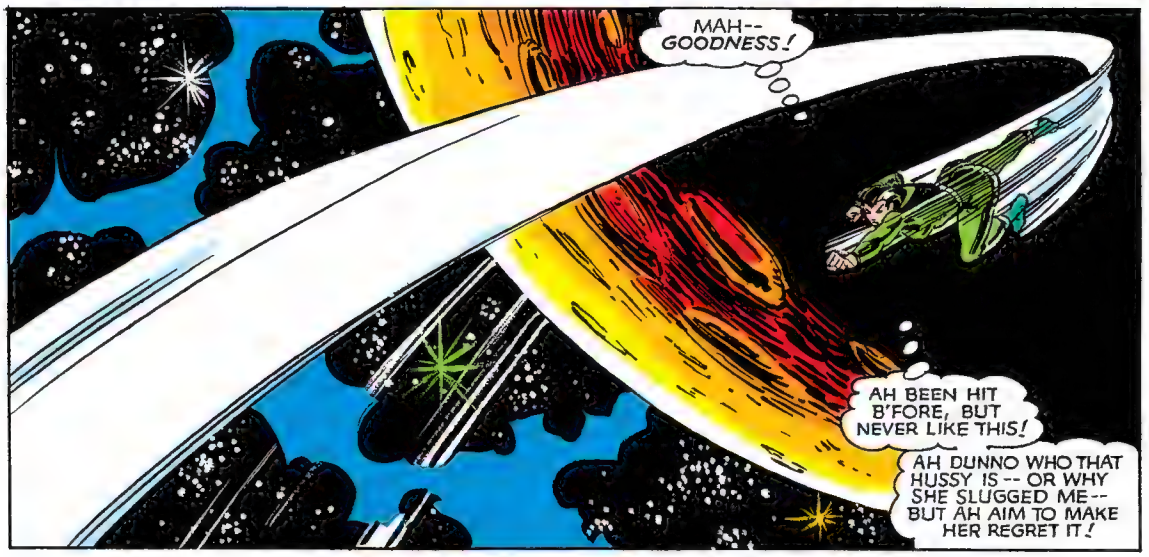
I FEEL AS THOUGH I STAND AT A CROSS-ROADS. TO REMAIN AN X-MAN -- ESPECIALLY AS LEADER--I MUST SACRIFICE THE BELIEFS THAT GIVE MY LIFE MEANING. YET THE ALTERNATIVE MEANS LEAVING THOSE I LOVE, FOREVER.
THIS IS MY HOME, THEY ARE MY FAMILY-- HOW CAN I DESERT THEM?!
AND XAVIER TOLD ME, THE DAY WE MET, THAT MY POWERS SHOULD BE USED FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL HUMANITY. WAS I WRONG TO LISTEN? CAN I DENY THAT RESPONSIBILITY?

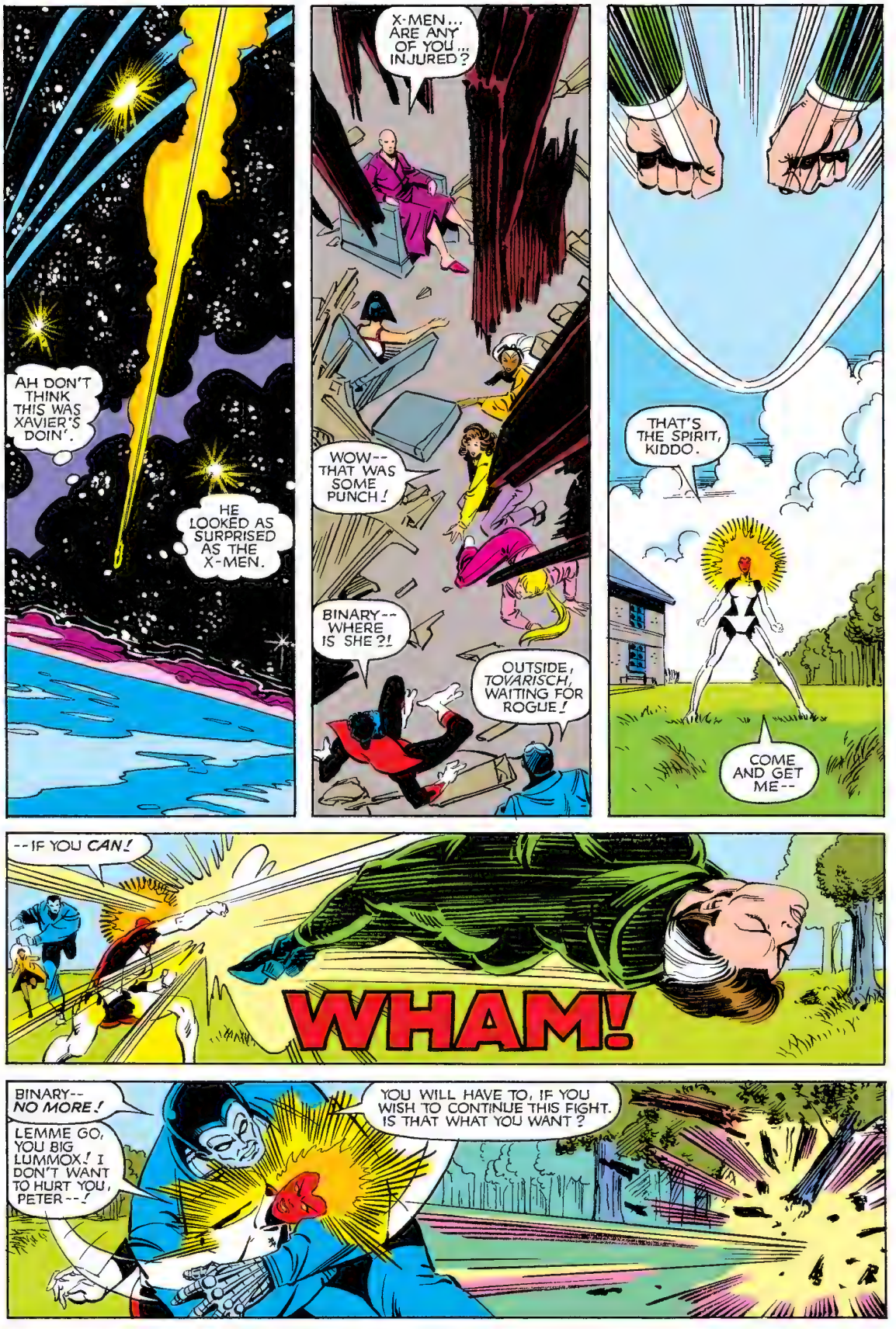
I DO NOT KNOW, I DO NOT KNOW-- eh?!!
THUNDER?!?

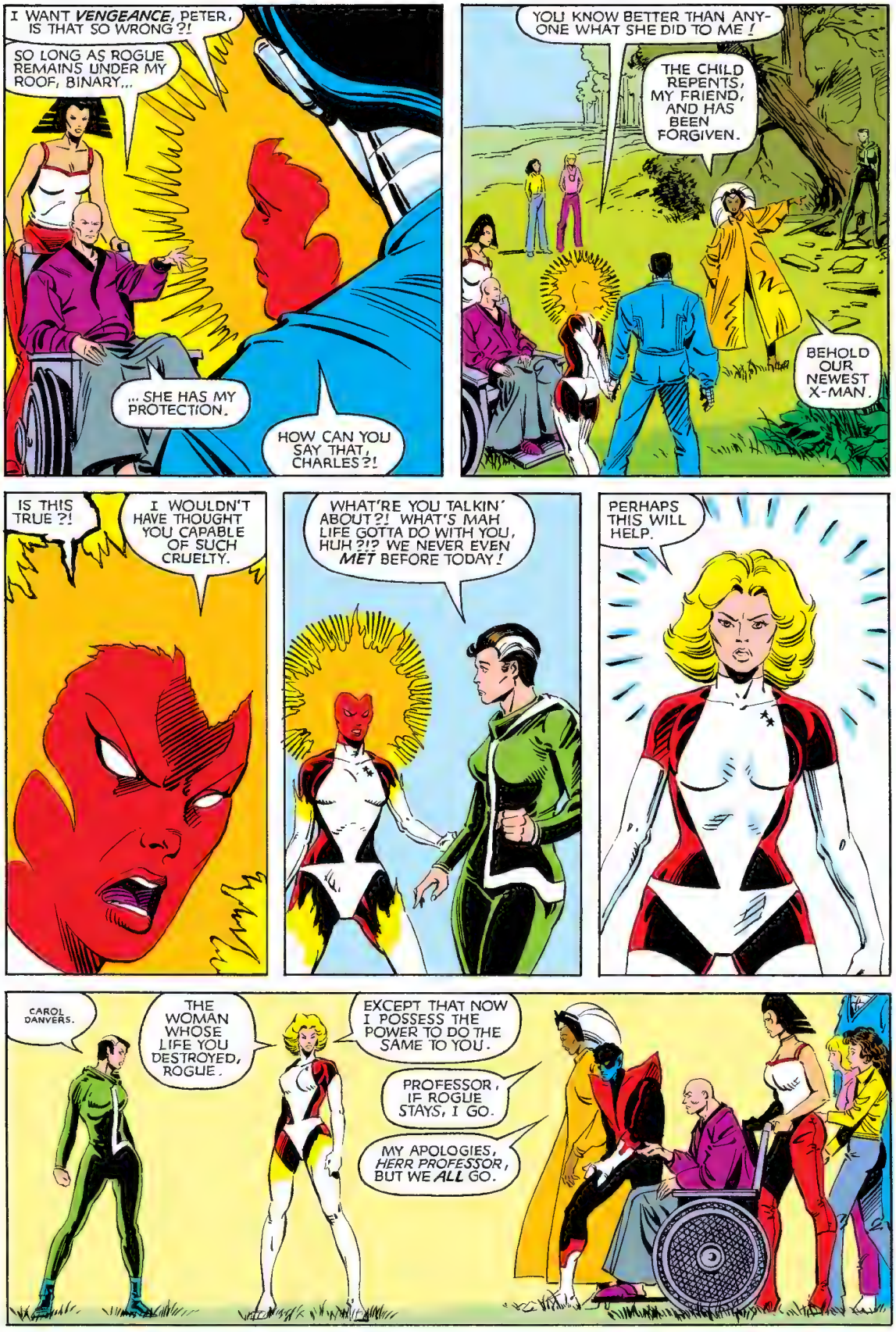

MY RAIN SHOWER HAS GROWN INTO A FULL-FLEDGED STORM... IT IS DESTROYING MY PLANTS!
A GESTURE, A THOUGHT, DISPERSES THE STORM, AS EASILY AS IT WAS FIRST CREATED...
...BUT THE DAMAGE HAS BEEN DONE.
WEATHER AROUND ME ALWAYS REFLECTS MY EMOTIONAL STATE.
MY ANXIETY, MY CONFUSION-- MY... FEAR -- MANIFESTED THEMSELVES AS VIOLENCE.
AND MY POOR PLANTS SUFFERED FOR IT.
STORM, MY EXAMINATION OF ROGUE IS FINISHED. PLEASE REPORT TO MY STUDY.
IT IS BECAUSE OF YOU THAT I BECAME AN X-MAN, OLD MAN--
-- AND THAT DECISION IS DESTROYING ME!
AS I BROKE MY PSILINK WITH STORM, I CAUGHT A THOUGHT-FLASH FROM HER.
SHE'S UNUSUALLY DISTURBED.
HAVE YOU PROBED DEEPER, TO LEARN WHY?
"THAT WILL HAVE TO WAIT. ROGUE IS MY PRIMARY CONCERN AT PRESENT. IF IT'S A SERIOUS PROBLEM, SHE'LL NO DOUBT TELL ME."


I'VE QUESTIONED ROGUE, AT LENGTH, AND AM CONVINCED OF BOTH HER NEED AND HER SINCERITY.
THEREFORE, I HAVE DECIDED TO ADMIT HER NOT ONLY TO THE SCHOOL...
... BUT TO THE X-MEN, AS A PROBATIONARY MEMBER...
NO.
I BEG YOUR PARDON, STORM?
I LEAD THE X-MEN, PROFESSOR. I THINK THAT ENTITLES ME TO SOME SAY IN THIS MATTER.
YOU KNOW ROGUE'S HISTORY. ARE WE EXPECTED TO FIGHT BESIDE SOMEONE WE DO NOT--*DARE NOT*--TRUST...
...WHO MIGHT BETRAY US AT ANY TIME?!
MEANWHILE, AN UNSUSPECTING BINARY...
... AT LAST RETURNS HOME.

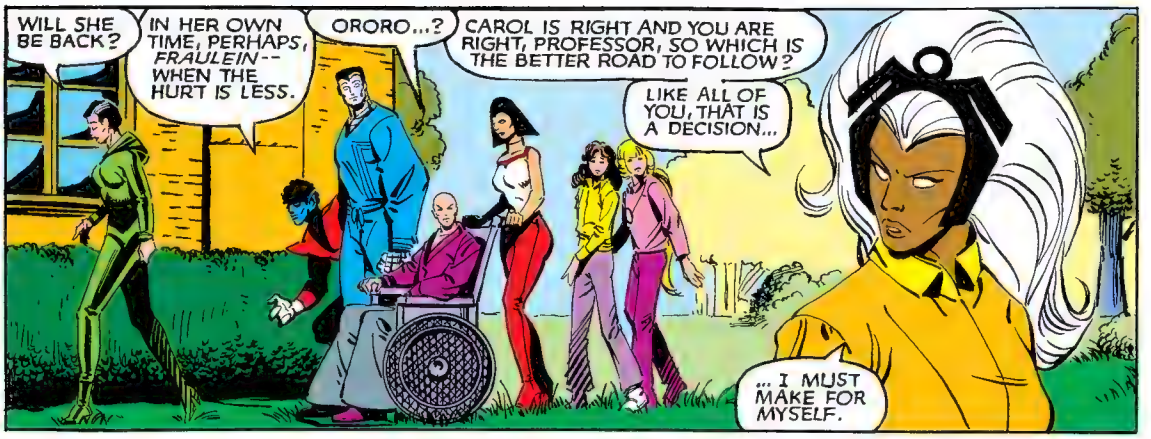

POW!


MAH-- GOODNESS!
AH BEEN HIT B'FORE, BUT NEVER LIKE THIS!
AH DUNNO WHO THAT HUSSY IS -- OR WHY SHE SLUGGED ME -- BUT AH AIM TO MAKE HER REGRET IT!


AH DON'T THINK THIS WAS XAVIER'S DOIN'.
HE LOOKED AS SURPRISED AS THE X-MEN.
X-MEN... ARE ANY OF YOU... INJURED?
WOW-- THAT WAS SOME PUNCH!
BINARY-- WHERE IS SHE?!
OUTSIDE, TOVARISCH, WAITING FOR ROGUE!
THAT'S THE SPIRIT, KIDDO.
COME AND GET ME--
--IF YOU CAN!
WHAM!
BINARY-- NO MORE!
LEMME GO, YOU BIG LUMMOX! I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU, PETER--!
YOU WILL HAVE TO, IF YOU WISH TO CONTINUE THIS FIGHT. IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?

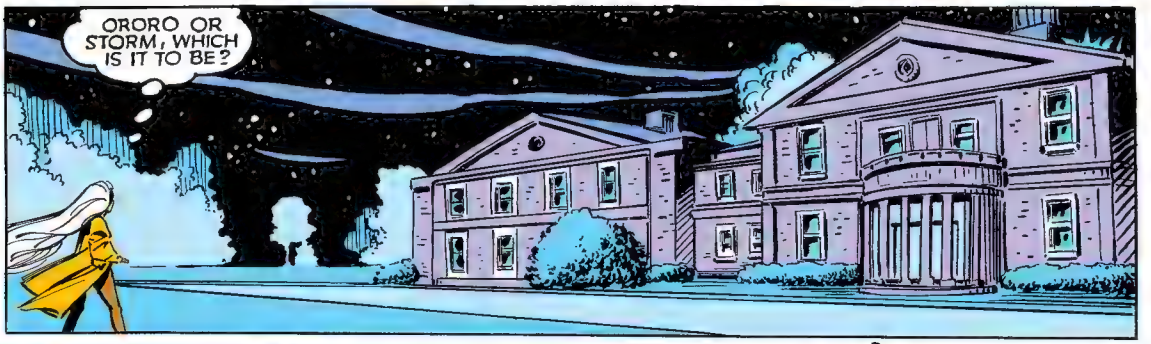

I WANT VENGEANCE, PETER. IS THAT SO WRONG?!
SO LONG AS ROGUE REMAINS UNDER MY ROOF, BINARY...
... SHE HAS MY PROTECTION.
HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT, CHARLES?!
YOU KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE WHAT SHE DID TO ME!
THE CHILD REPENTS, MY FRIEND, AND HAS BEEN FORGIVEN.
BEHOLD OUR NEWEST X-MAN.
IS THIS TRUE?!
I WOULDN'T HAVE THOUGHT YOU CAPABLE OF SUCH CRUELTY.
WHAT'RE YOU TALKIN' ABOUT?! WHAT'S MAH LIFE GOTTA DO WITH YOU, HUH?!? WE NEVER EVEN MET BEFORE TODAY!
PERHAPS THIS WILL HELP.
CAROL DANVERS.
THE WOMAN WHOSE LIFE YOU DESTROYED, ROGUE.
EXCEPT THAT NOW I POSSESS THE POWER TO DO THE SAME TO YOU.
PROFESSOR, IF ROGUE STAYS, I GO.
MY APOLOGIES, HERR PROFESSOR, BUT WE ALL GO.

I SEE. WE PICK AND CHOOSE WHO WE HELP, IS THAT IT?
SOME ARE WORTHY, OTHERS NOT?!
WHO WAS IT, ORORO, TOLD ME *WOLVERINE* WAS AN X-MAN, NOT BECAUSE OF HIS "STERLING" CHACTER, BUT HIS POTENTIAL FOR GOOD.
THAT TO DENY HIM-- THOUGH WE ABHOR HIS VIOLENT NATURE-- WOULD THEREBY DENY OUR TRUE REASON FOR BEING, WHICH IS TO HELP HIM ACHIEVE THAT POTENTIAL.
THE SAME ARGUMENT HOLDS FOR ROGUE, DOES IT NOT? OF COURSE, THERE'S A RISK IN ACCEPTING HER-- BUT CONSIDER THE ALTERNATIVE. AT LEAST WITH US SHE HAS A CHANCE FOR A BETTER LIFE. DENY HER AND WE CONDEMN HER OUTRIGHT...
... AND THAT I WILL NEVER DO-- TO *ANY* MUTANT-- SO LONG AS BREATH REMAINS WITHIN ME.
I TRUST YOU AS I WOULD MY OWN FATHER, PROFESSOR. SO I WILL PUT ASIDE MY FEARS AND GIVE ROGUE HER CHANCE. I ASK MY FRIENDS TO DO THE SAME.
I WILL IF I HAVE TO. BUT I WON'T LIKE HER. EVER!
ALL RIGHT, *MEIN HERR*-- YOU WIN.
CAROL...?
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME, CHARLES? UNDERSTANDING? APPROVAL?!
I'LL CONCEDE ONE, BUT NOT THE OTHER. ROGUE TORE MY LIFE-- MY VERY SOUL -- TO SHREDS AND THOSE SCALES CAN NEVER BE BALANCED. I'M SORRY, I'M JUST NOT THAT FORGIVING.
I HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE HERE, CHARLES, NO REAL TIES TO BREAK. THAT MAKES MY DECISION EASY. I'M NOT AN X-MAN--
-- AND ALL OF A SUDDEN, I'M *GLAD!*

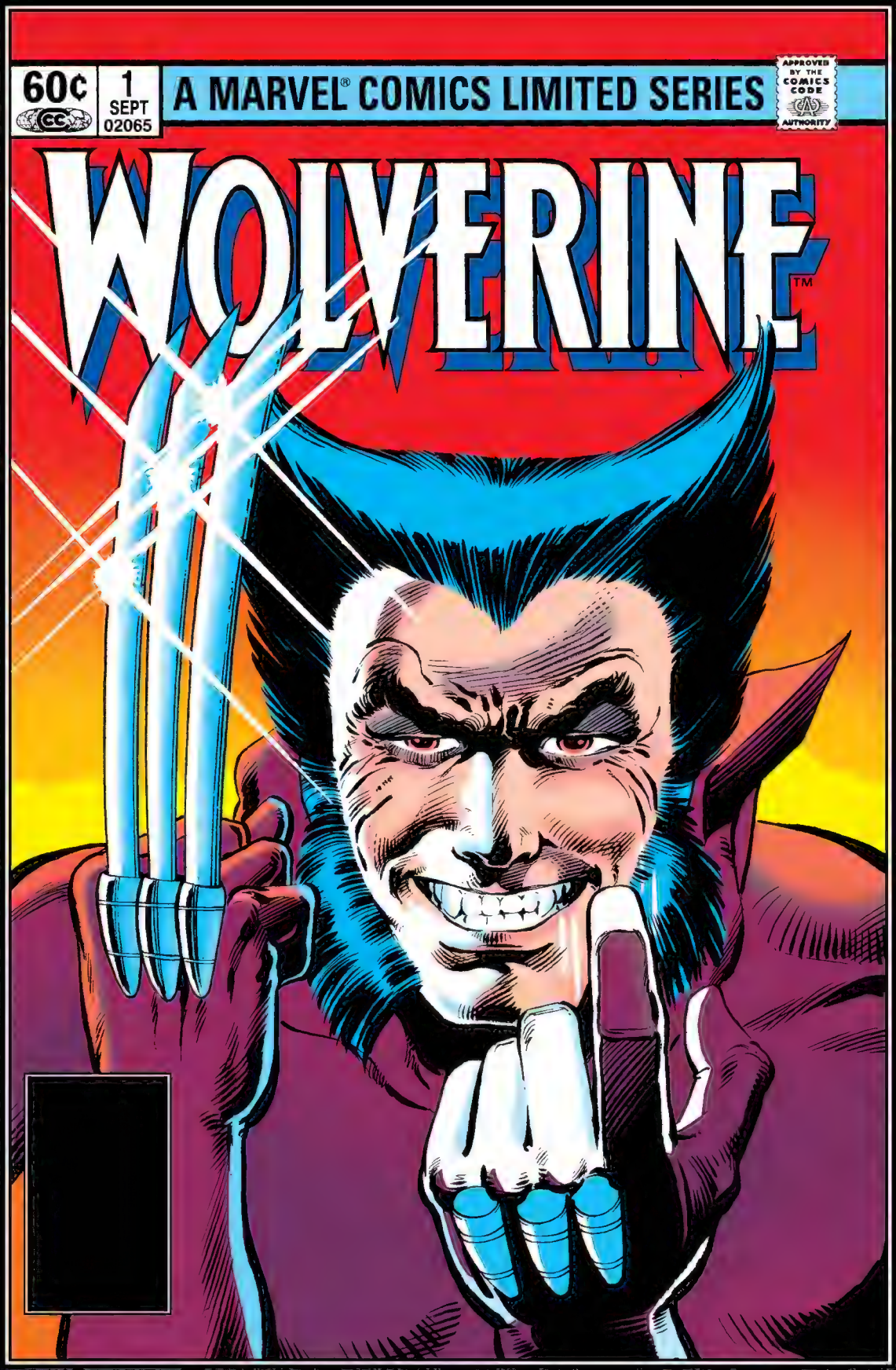

WILL SHE BE BACK?
IN HER OWN TIME, PERHAPS, FRAULEIN-- WHEN THE HURT IS LESS.
ORORO...?
CAROL IS RIGHT AND YOU ARE RIGHT, PROFESSOR, SO WHICH IS THE BETTER ROAD TO FOLLOW?
LIKE ALL OF YOU, THAT IS A DECISION...
... I MUST MAKE FOR MYSELF.

DOES EVERY ADULT YEARN SO FOR CHILDHOOD, EVERY PERSON FACE SUCH AWFUL DILEMMAS?
I WISH I WERE THE GODDESS MEN THOUGHT ME IN AFRICA, FOR THEN WITH A WAVE OF THE HAND I COULD CURE EVERY ILL, MAKE EVERYONE HAPPY.

BUT I AM ONLY HUMAN-- AND MUST THEREFORE COPE, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE, AS BEST I CAN. THIS IS MY MOMENT OF TRUTH.
I WANT TO LEAVE, YET DUTY DEMANDS I STAY-- THOUGH THAT MEANS ACCEPTING ROGUE.
WHATEVER I CHOOSE, I WILL NO LONGER BE THE WOMAN I WAS-- BUT WHAT WILL I BECOME?



NEXT: SCARLET IN GLORY!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A MARVEL® COMICS LIMITED SERIES
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WOLVERINE™

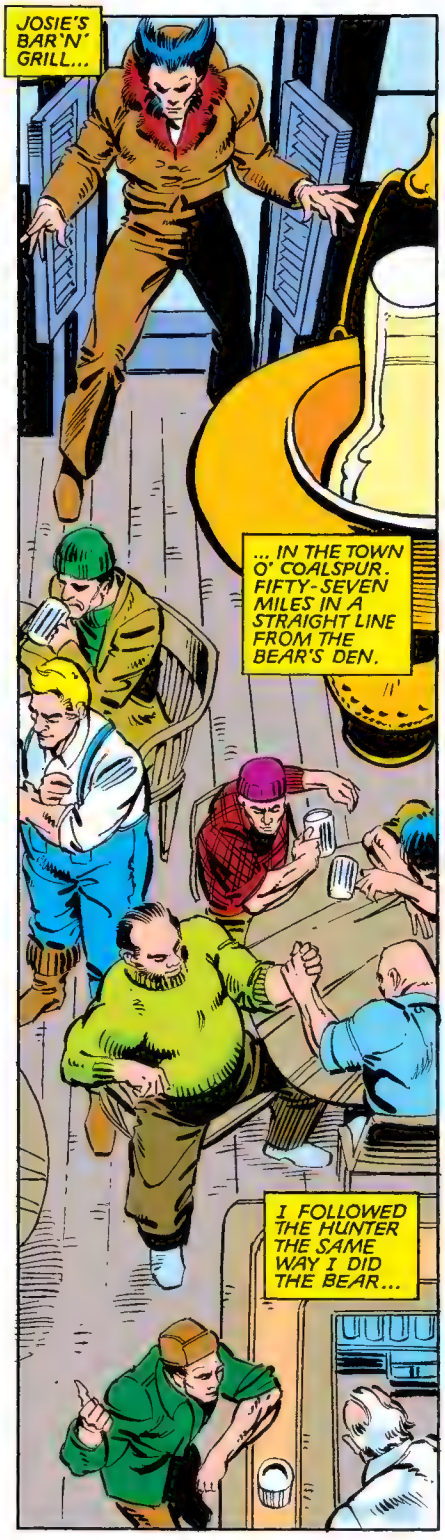
A STAN LEE PRESENTATION
I'M
WOLVERINE.
I'M THE BEST THERE IS AT WHAT I DO. BUT WHAT I DO BEST ISN'T VERY NICE.
CHRIS CLAREMONT
writer
FRANK MILLER
penciler
JOSEF RUBINSTIEN
finisher
TOM ORZECHOWSKI
letterer
GLYNIS WEIN
colorist
LOUISE JONES
editor
JIM SHOOTER
supervisor

THIS IS HOME TO ME-- THE CANADIAN ROCKIES-- LAND AS STARK AN' ELEMENTAL AS MY SOUL.
I'M HERE ON BUSINESS.
TO HUNT.
TO KILL.
LIKE I SAID-- WHAT I DO BEST.
I PICKED UP HIS TRAIL LATE YESTERDAY AN; JUST BEFORE DAWN, FOUND THE LATEST EXAMPLES OF HIS HANDIWORK. TWO MOUNTIES-- WHAT WAS LEFT OF 'EM, ANYWAY.
THEY WERE GOOD MEN. EXPERIENCED. WELL-ARMED. CAREFUL.
SUCKERS NEVER HAD A CHANCE.
WIND SHIFTED DURING MY CLIMB. HE KNOWS I'M COMING.
HE'S CONFUSED, PROBABLY A LITTLE SCARED.
HE'S NOT USED TO BEIN' CHALLENGED ON HIS OWN TURF. HE'LL WAIT FOR ME TO MAKE THE FIRST MOVE.
IF I WALK BY, HE'LL CHARGE OUT AFTER ME.
I DON'T WANT THAT-- TOO MUCH RISK OF HIS ESCAPING AGAIN. MAD HE MAY BE, BUT HE AIN'T STUPID.

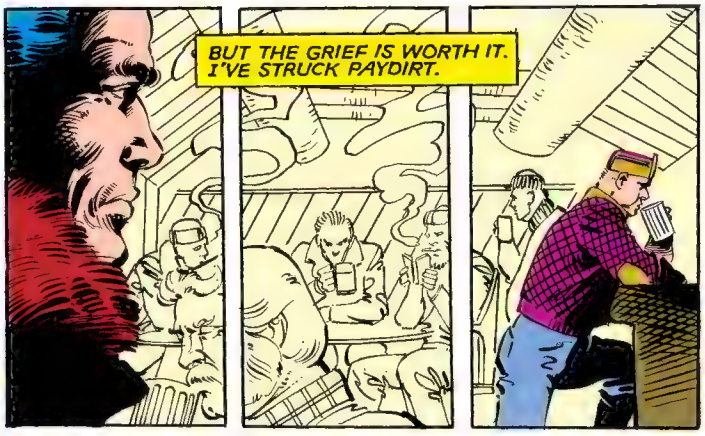
NO OTHER EXITS. AN' THESE SIGNS ARE HOURS OLD. HE'S STILL INSIDE, PROBABLY SLEEPIN' OFF HIS LAST MEAL.
I LOOK, LISTEN, SMELL. WAIT.
I CAN'T PINPOINT HIM-- HIS CAVE'S TOO DEEP, WITH TOO MANY BRANCH PASSAGES. PERFECT FOR AN AMBUSH. BETTER I LET HIM COME TO ME.
HE ROARS, A CHALLENGE.
I SMILE-- WON'T BE LONG NOW.
IT ISN'T.
HE'S BIG AN' MEAN-- A ROGUE GRIZZLY BEAR. NO MORE FEARSOME-- OR DEADLY-- CREATURE EXISTS ON EARTH.
'CEPT ME.
HIS CLAWS GLEAM IN THE HALF-LIGHT.

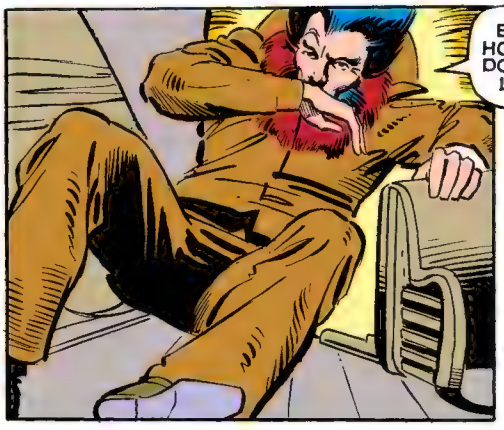
SO DO MINE.
SNIKT
THEY'RE FORGED OF PURE ADAMANTIUM-- THE STRONGEST METAL KNOWN. UNBREAKABLE AN' RAZOR-SHARP, THEY CUT THROUGH STEEL LIKE PAPER.
MY SKELETON'S LACED WITH THE SAME STUFF, WHICH MEANS IT CAN WITHSTAND VIRTUALLY ANY AMOUNT OF PUNISHMENT. AN ASSET IN MY LINE OF WORK.
BY BIRTH, I'M A MUTANT. BY PROFESSION, FOR A TIME, I WAS A SECRET AGENT. NOW, BY CHOICE, I'M A SUPER HERO-- ONE O' THE UNCANNY X-MEN.
CHAKK
BEFORE THE ROGUE REALIZES WHAT'S HAP'NIN', HE'S CRIPPLED...
... MORTALLY WOUNDED.
I WANT THIS OVER QUICKLY, BUT DYIN'S A LONG WAY FROM BEIN' DEAD.
THE BEAR HOWLS-- MORE RAGE THAN PAIN-- AN' LUNGES FOR ME. I HIT HIM TOO HARD, TOO FAST-- HE DOESN'T KNOW YET HOW BADLY HE'S HURT. HE'S BECOME A TRUE BERSERKER-- HIS FURY GIVIN' HIM A TERRIBLE, ALMOST IRRESISTIBLE POWER AN' ENDURANCE.

I WISH THERE WAS ANOTHER WAY.
BUT THERE ISN'T.
THERE'S AN ARROW IN HIS BACK.
AN ILLEGAL BARBED POINT, COATED WITH POISON. BUT THE DOSAGE DIDN'T KILL. INSTEAD, IT DROVE THE BEAR INSANE. THE HUNTER COULD HAVE KEPT AFTER HIM, FINISHED HIM OFF. BUT THE CREEP COULDN'T BE BOTHERED. HE FIGURED HIS GUNK'D DO THE JOB FOR HIM.
CHOKK
HE WAS WRONG.
SEVEN MEN, THREE WOMEN, FIVE KIDS PAID THE PRICE FOR HIS STUPIDITY. HE AS MUCH AS MURDERED 'EM.
NOW'S THE TIME TO BALANCE THE BOOKS.


JOSIE'S BAR 'N' GRILL...
... IN THE TOWN O' COALSPUR. FIFTY-SEVEN MILES IN A STRAIGHT LINE FROM THE BEAR'S DEN.
I FOLLOWED THE HUNTER THE SAME WAY I DID THE BEAR...

... BY **SCENT.** THERE WAS A RESIDUE LEFT ON THE ARROW. I BACK-TRAILED THE BEAR TO WHERE HE'D BEEN SHOT, FOLLOWED THE HUNTER FROM THERE. IT WASN'T EASY, EVEN FOR MY ENHANCED SENSES. I'VE BEEN ON THE ROAD FOR DAYS.





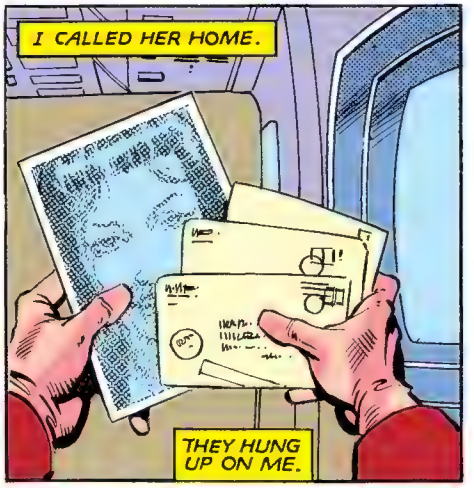
... BUT I LET THE MAN LIVE.

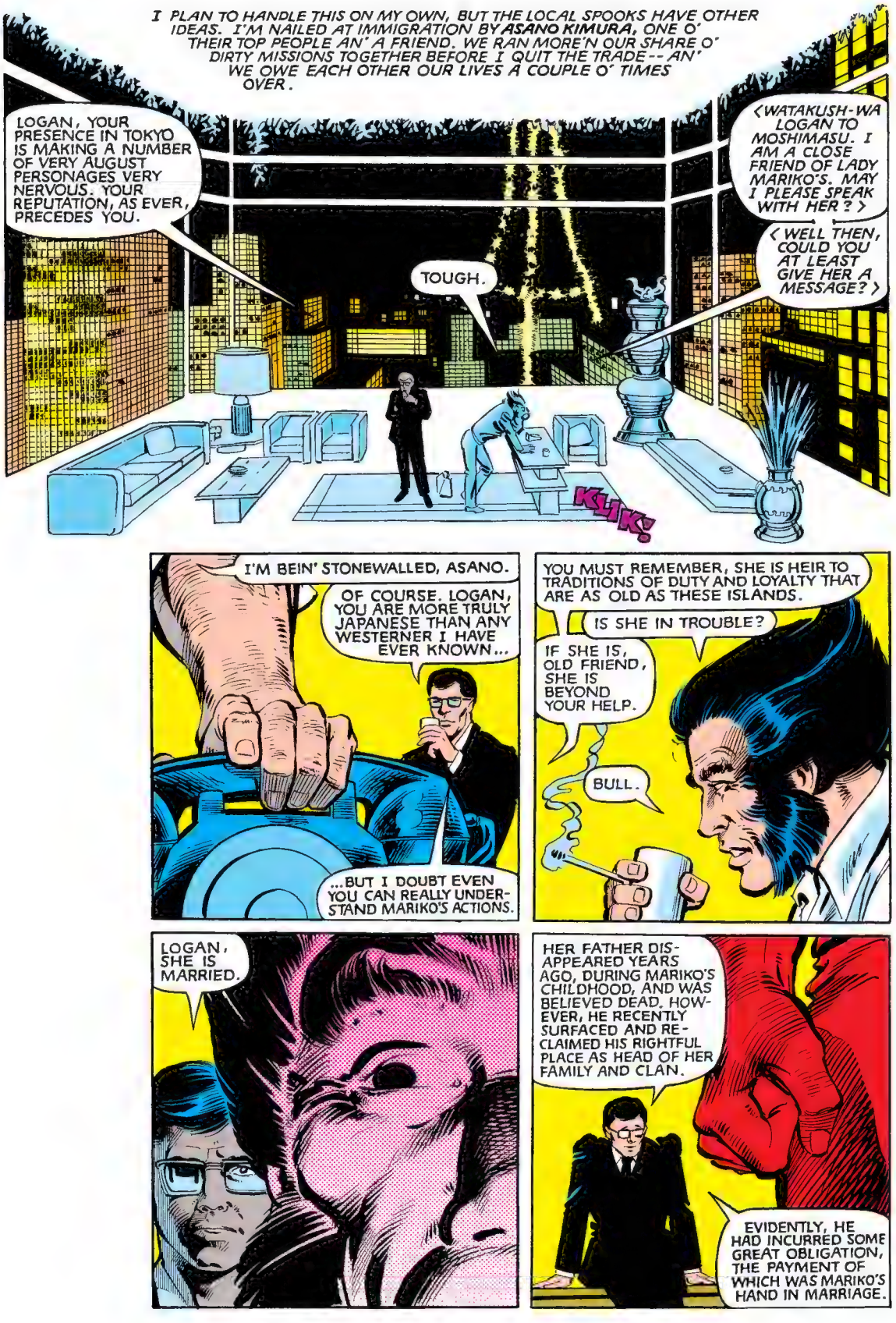
DAUGHTER OF ONE OF THE NOBLEST, RICHEST, MOST POWERFUL FAMILIES IN JAPAN, SHE CAN TRACE HER LINEAGE BACK ALMOST 2,000 YEARS. ME, I KNOW MY FATHER -- THAT'S AS FAR AS IT GOES.

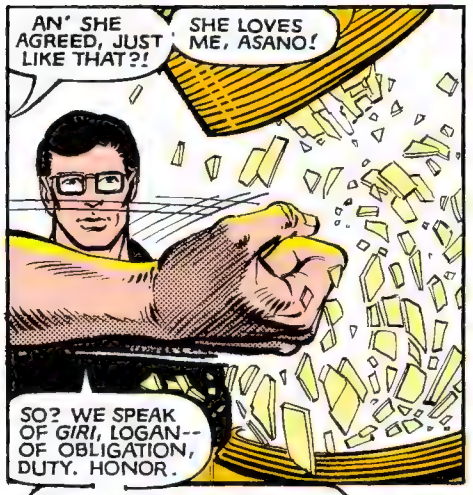
FROM THE MOMENT WE MET, I LOVED HER. AN' SHE LOVED ME.

AIN'T LIFE A CROCK?

IN CANADA, I GAVE MY DEPOSITION AN' SAW THE HUNTER BOUND OVER FOR TRIAL, BEFORE HEADIN' STATESIDE TO THE X-MEN'S SECRET HEADQUARTERS NEAR NEW YORK. I FOUND A PILE OF MAIL WAITIN' FOR ME-- ALL THE LETTERS I'D SENT MARIKO, RETURNED UNOPENED. I PHONED HER EMBASSY, THEY SAID SHE'D BEEN SUMMONED BACK TO JAPAN WEEKS AGO.

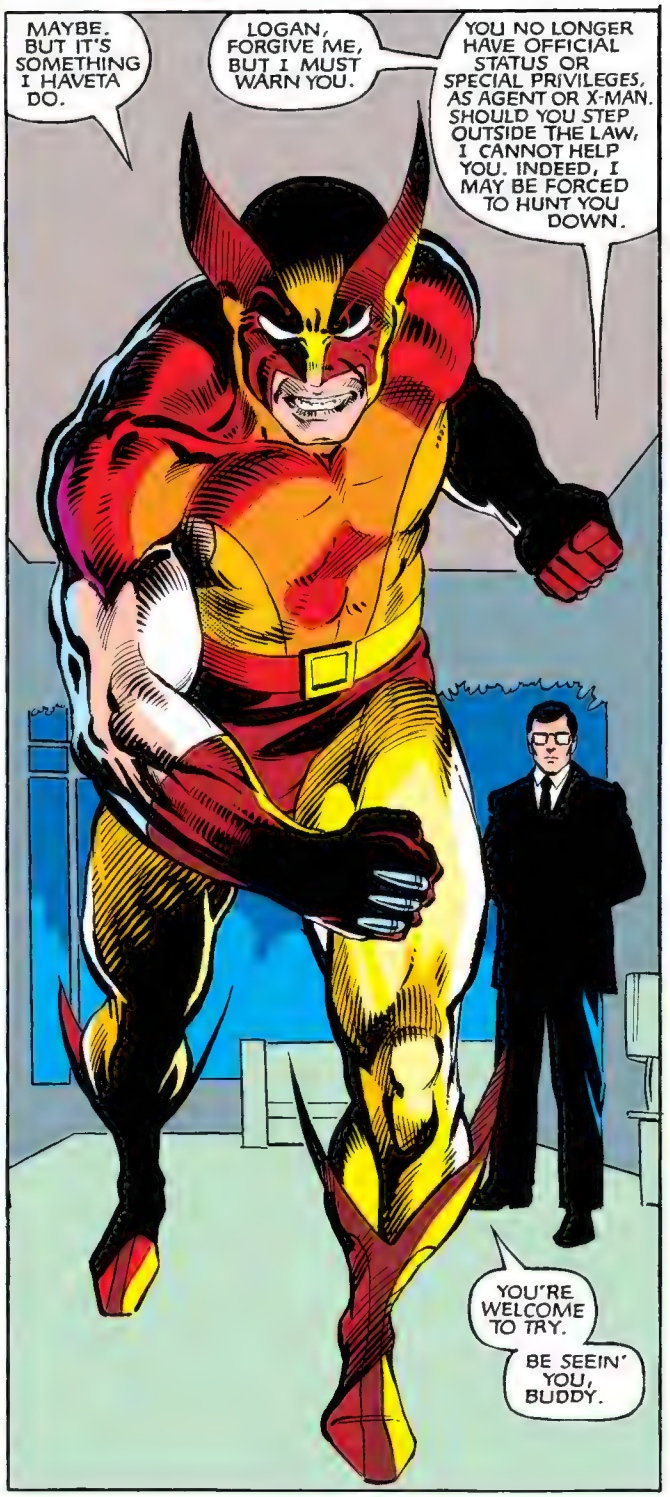


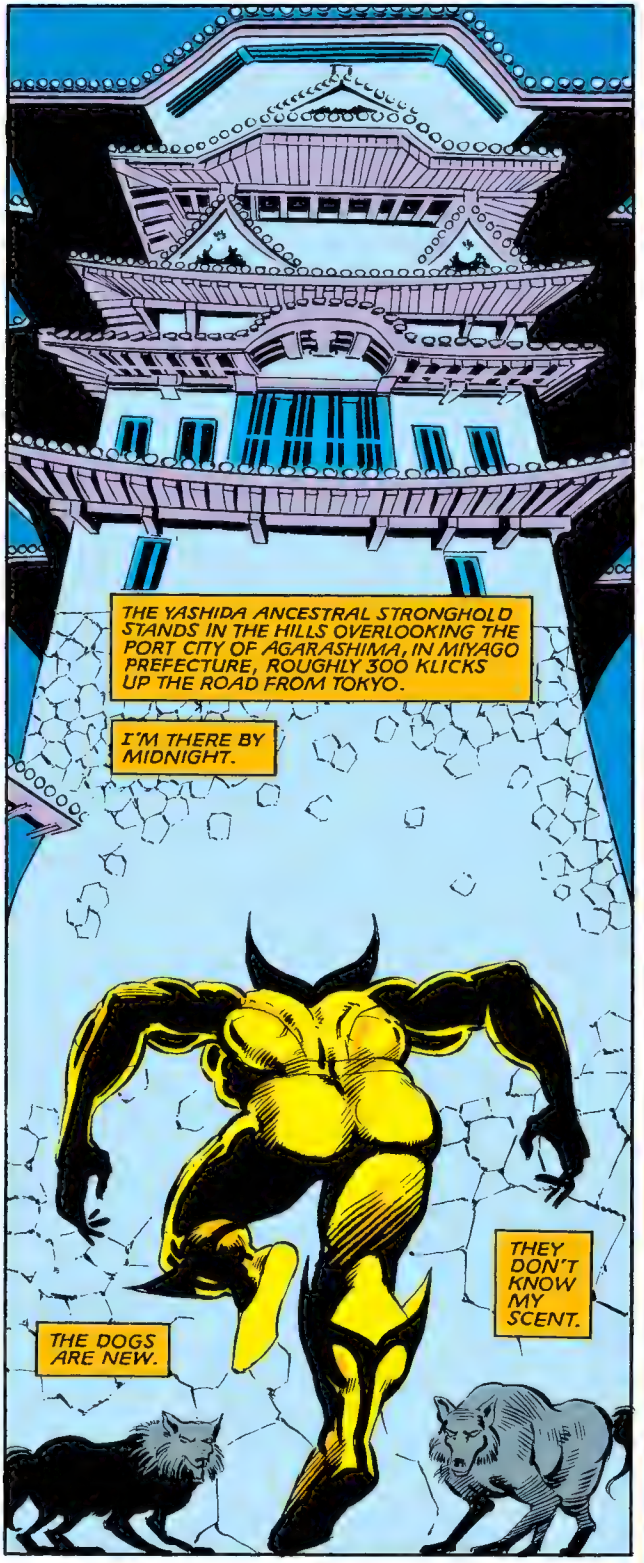

I PLAN TO HANDLE THIS ON MY OWN, BUT THE LOCAL SPOOKS HAVE OTHER IDEAS. I'M NAILED AT IMMIGRATION BY ASANO KIMURA, ONE O' THEIR TOP PEOPLE AN' A FRIEND. WE RAN MORE'N OUR SHARE O' DIRTY MISSIONS TOGETHER BEFORE I QUIT THE TRADE -- AN' WE OWE EACH OTHER OUR LIVES A COUPLE O' TIMES OVER.
LOGAN, YOUR PRESENCE IN TOKYO IS MAKING A NUMBER OF VERY AUGUST PERSONAGES VERY NERVOUS. YOUR REPUTATION, AS EVER, PRECEDES YOU.
TOUGH.
〈WATAKUSH-WA LOGAN TO MOSHIMASU. I AM A CLOSE FRIEND OF LADY MARIKO'S. MAY I PLEASE SPEAK WITH HER?〉
〈WELL THEN, COULD YOU AT LEAST GIVE HER A MESSAGE?〉
KLIK!
I'M BEIN' STONEWALLED, ASANO.
OF COURSE. LOGAN, YOU ARE MORE TRULY JAPANESE THAN ANY WESTERNER I HAVE EVER KNOWN...
...BUT I DOUBT EVEN YOU CAN REALLY UNDERSTAND MARIKO'S ACTIONS.
YOU MUST REMEMBER, SHE IS HEIR TO TRADITIONS OF DUTY AND LOYALTY THAT ARE AS OLD AS THESE ISLANDS.
IS SHE IN TROUBLE?
IF SHE IS, OLD FRIEND, SHE IS BEYOND YOUR HELP.
BULL.
LOGAN, SHE IS MARRIED.
HER FATHER DISAPPEARED YEARS AGO, DURING MARIKO'S CHILDHOOD, AND WAS BELIEVED DEAD. HOWEVER, HE RECENTLY SURFACED AND RECLAIMED HIS RIGHTFUL PLACE AS HEAD OF HER FAMILY AND CLAN.
EVIDENTLY, HE HAD INCURRED SOME GREAT OBLIGATION, THE PAYMENT OF WHICH WAS MARIKO'S HAND IN MARRIAGE.


AN' SHE AGREED, JUST LIKE THAT?!
SHE LOVES ME, ASANO!
SO? WE SPEAK OF GIRI, LOGAN-- OF OBLIGATION, DUTY. HONOR.

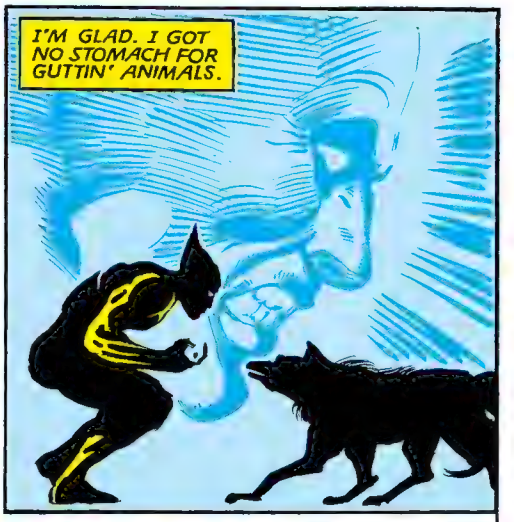
TO DENY THAT WOULD MEAN DENYING HER ESSENTIAL SELF. SHE WOULD RATHER DIE.
I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT HER.
YOU MUST LEARN. SHE IS LOST TO YOU.

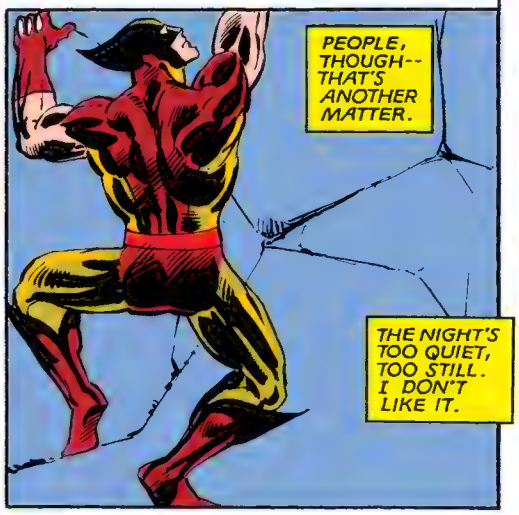
I'VE GOT TO SEE HER.
WHY? TO HURT HER ALL THE MORE ? SHE WILL ANSWER NEITHER YOUR LETTERS NOR YOUR TELE-PHONE CALLS. RESPECT HER SILENCE, LOGAN, LEAVE HER BE.
IF SHE FEELS FOR YOU AS YOU SAY SHE DOES, THEN THIS MARRIAGE HAS BROKEN HER HEART, TOO. CONFRONTING HER WILL ONLY MAKE THINGS WORSE.


MAYBE. BUT IT'S SOMETHING I HAVETA DO.
LOGAN, FORGIVE ME, BUT I MUST WARN YOU.
YOU NO LONGER HAVE OFFICIAL STATUS OR SPECIAL PRIVILEGES, AS AGENT OR X-MAN. SHOULD YOU STEP OUTSIDE THE LAW, I CANNOT HELP YOU. INDEED, I MAY BE FORCED TO HUNT YOU DOWN.
YOU'RE WELCOME TO TRY.
BE SEEIN' YOU, BUDDY.

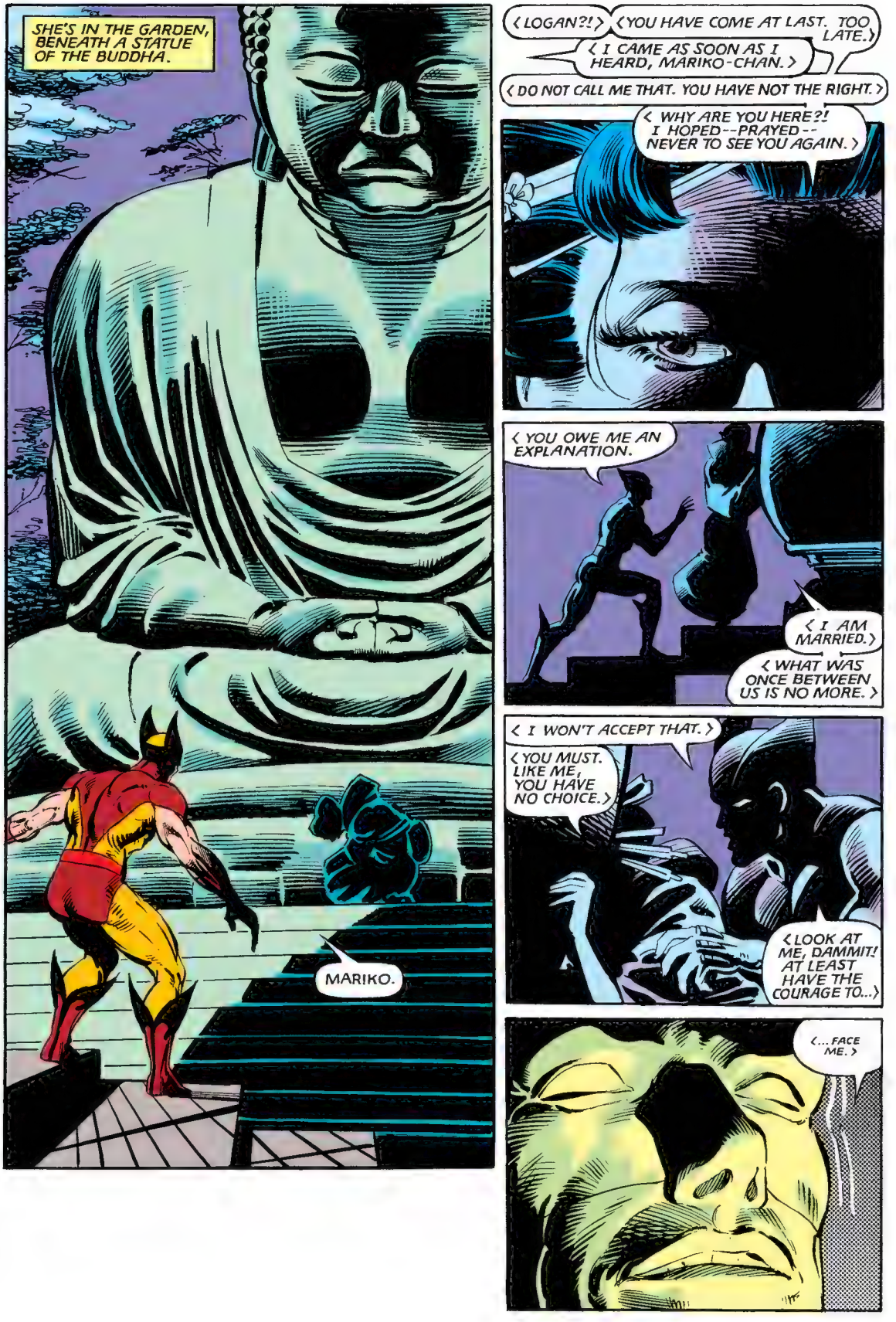

THE YASHIDA ANCESTRAL STRONGHOLD STANDS IN THE HILLS OVERLOOKING THE PORT CITY OF AGARASHIMA, IN MIYAGO PREFECTURE, ROUGHLY 300 KLICKS UP THE ROAD FROM TOKYO.
I'M THERE BY MIDNIGHT.
THEY DON'T KNOW MY SCENT.
THE DOGS ARE NEW.

THEY'RE KILLERS-- BUT SO AM I. WE LOCK EYES AN' WILLS, COMMUNICATIN' ON LEVELS FAR MORE COMPREHENSIVE AN' SUBTLE THAN SPEECH. THEY'RE MEAN BUT THEY AREN'T STUPID. THEY LET ME PASS.

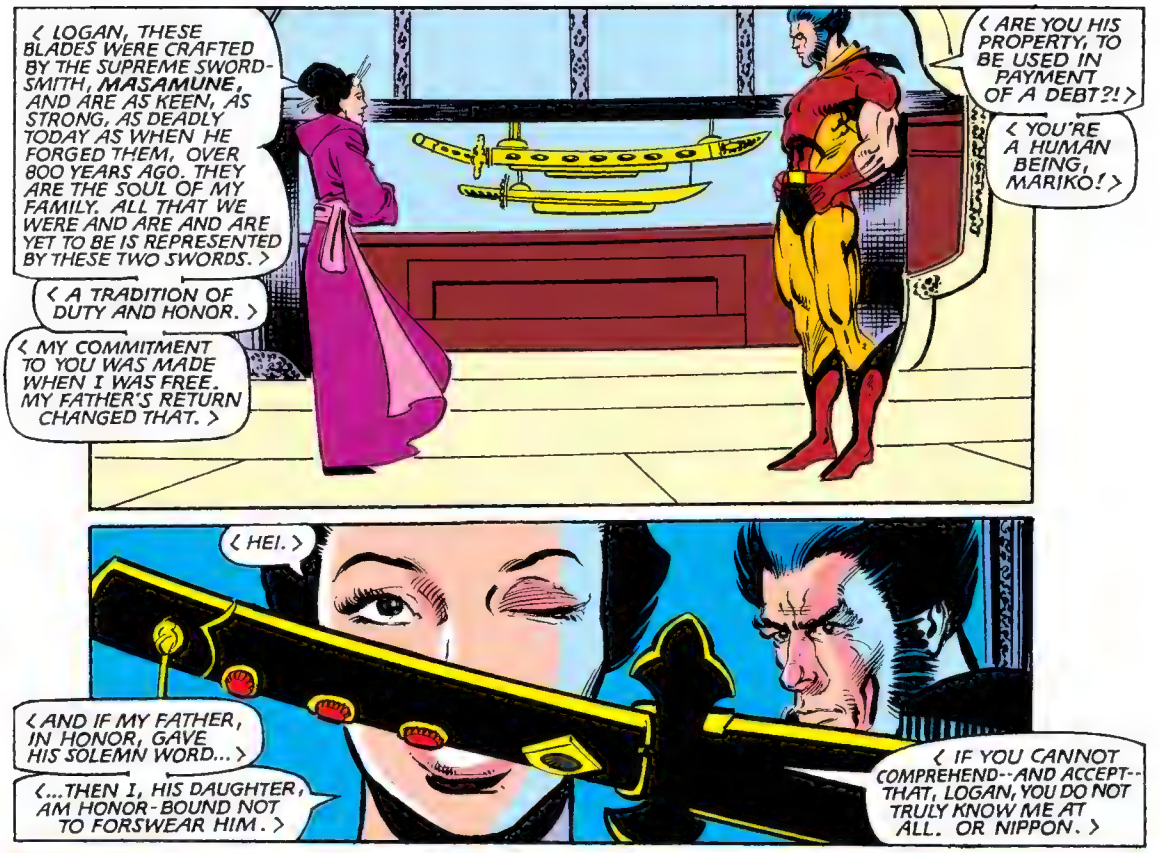




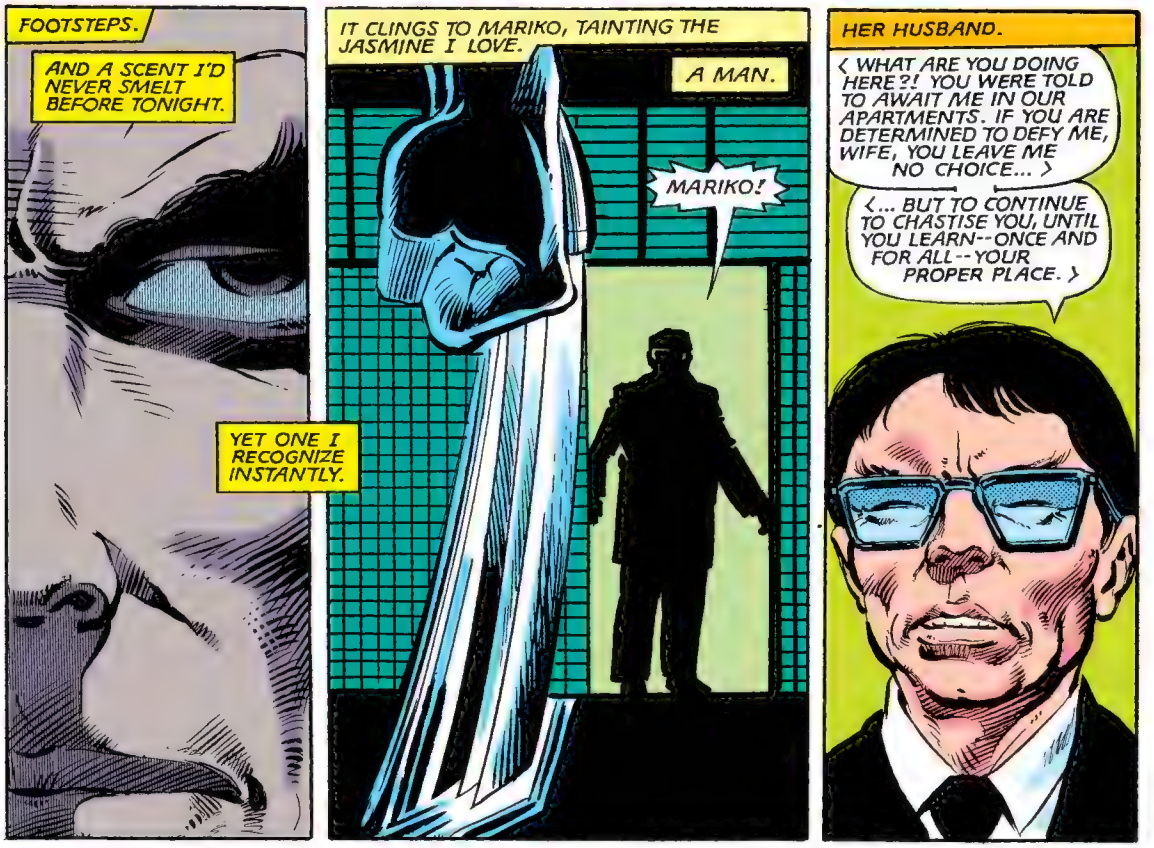
AS I ENTER THE HOUSE, I THINK OF THE BEAR'S DEN. THE SETTINGS HAVE A LOT IN COMMON.
I LOOK FOR A TRAP. NO LUCK. THE PLACE IS CLEAN.
THAT ONLY MAKES ME MORE WARY STILL.


SHE'S IN THE GARDEN, BENEATH A STATUE OF THE BUDDHA.
MARIKO.
〈LOGAN?!〉
〈YOU HAVE COME AT LAST. TOO LATE.〉
〈I CAME AS SOON AS I HEARD, MARIKO-CHAN.〉
〈DO NOT CALL ME THAT. YOU HAVE NOT THE RIGHT.〉
〈WHY ARE YOU HERE?! I HOPED--PRAYED--NEVER TO SEE YOU AGAIN.〉
〈YOU OWE ME AN EXPLANATION.
〈I AM MARRIED.〉
〈WHAT WAS ONCE BETWEEN US IS NO MORE.〉
〈I WON'T ACCEPT THAT.〉
〈YOU MUST. LIKE ME, YOU HAVE NO CHOICE.〉
〈LOOK AT ME, DAMMIT! AT LEAST HAVE THE COURAGE TO...〉
〈...FACE ME.〉

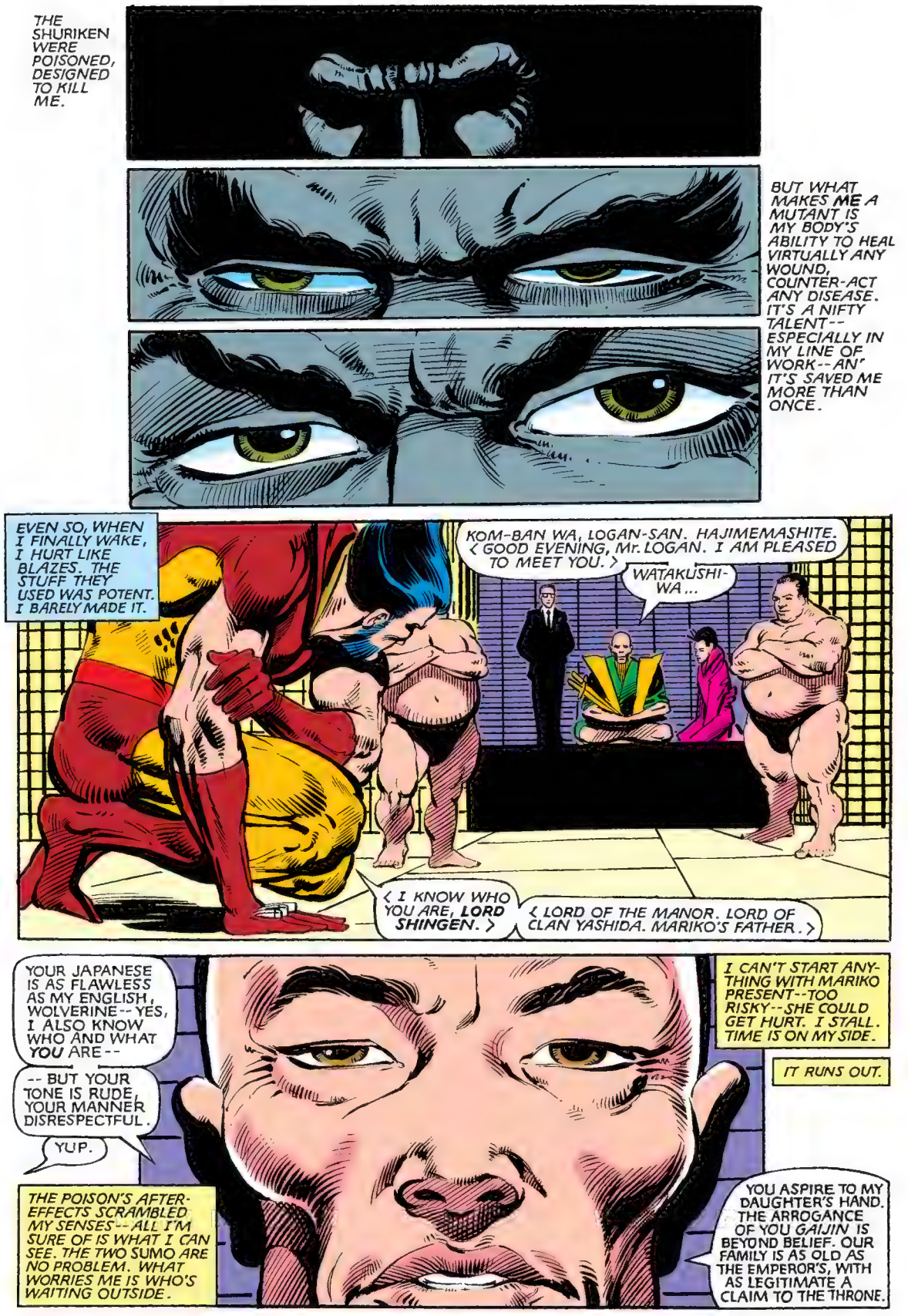
< ARE YOU SATISFIED? >
< GO. NOW, BEFORE YOU SHAME ME FURTHER. >
< WHO DID THIS?! >
< IT IS NONE OF YOUR CONCERN. >
< MARIKO, COME WITH ME. >
< I CANNOT. >
< ANY COURT IN THE LAND WILL GRANT YOU A DIVORCE. >
< I WILL NOT ASK FOR ONE. >
< I LOVE YOU! >
< AND I... YOU. BUT I AM BOUND BY FAR MORE IMPORTANT OBLIGATIONS. >

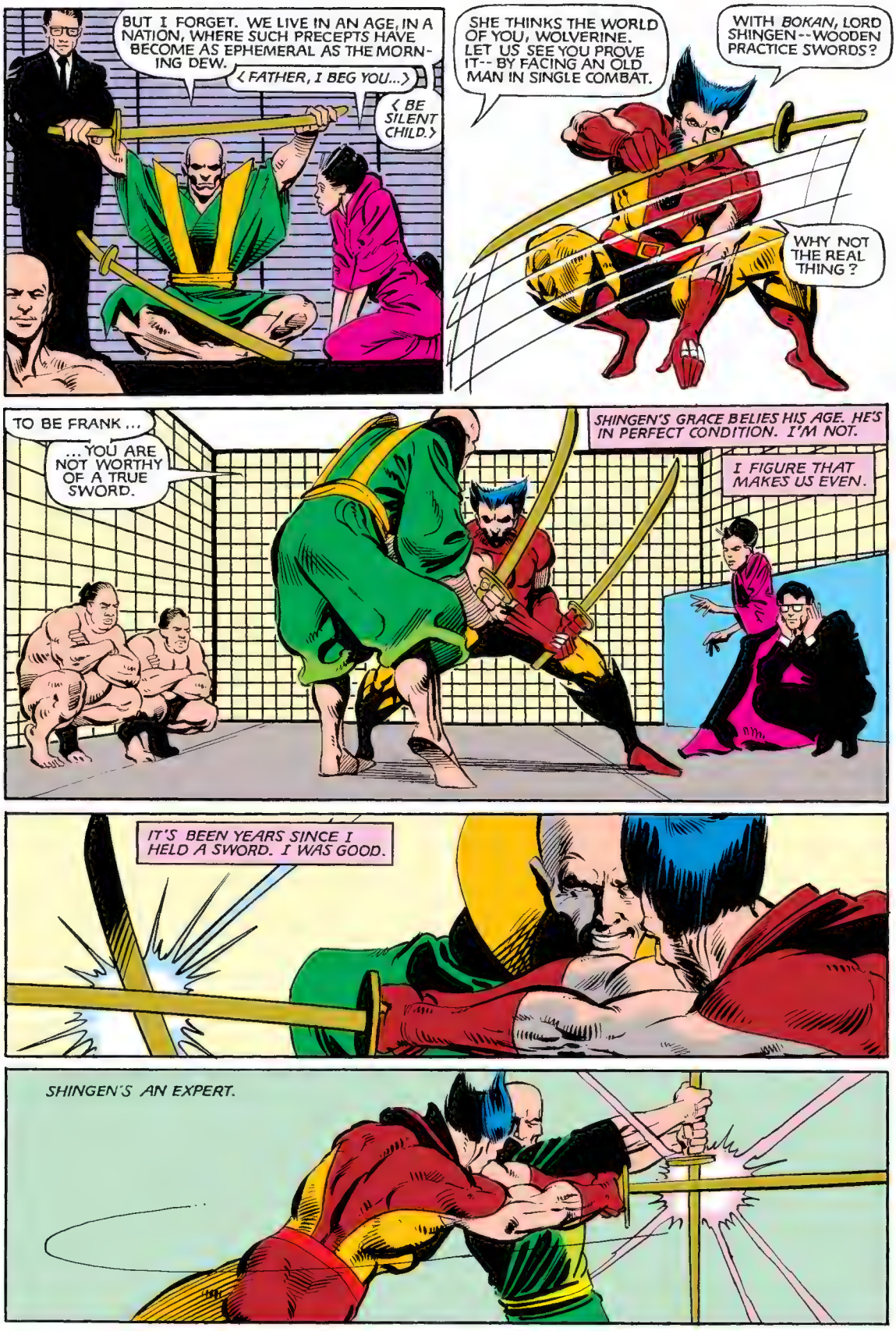

〈 LOGAN, THESE BLADES WERE CRAFTED BY THE SUPREME SWORD-SMITH, MASAMUNE, AND ARE AS KEEN, AS STRONG, AS DEADLY TODAY AS WHEN HE FORGED THEM, OVER 800 YEARS AGO. THEY ARE THE SOUL OF MY FAMILY. ALL THAT WE WERE AND ARE AND ARE YET TO BE IS REPRESENTED BY THESE TWO SWORDS. 〉
〈 A TRADITION OF DUTY AND HONOR. 〉
〈 MY COMMITMENT TO YOU WAS MADE WHEN I WAS FREE. MY FATHER'S RETURN CHANGED THAT. 〉
〈 ARE YOU HIS PROPERTY, TO BE USED IN PAYMENT OF A DEBT?! 〉
〈 YOU'RE A HUMAN BEING, MARIKO! 〉

〈 HEI. 〉
〈 AND IF MY FATHER, IN HONOR, GAVE HIS SOLEMN WORD... 〉
〈 ...THEN I, HIS DAUGHTER, AM HONOR-BOUND NOT TO FORSWEAR HIM. 〉
〈 IF YOU CANNOT COMPREHEND--AND ACCEPT--THAT, LOGAN, YOU DO NOT TRULY KNOW ME AT ALL. OR NIPPON. 〉

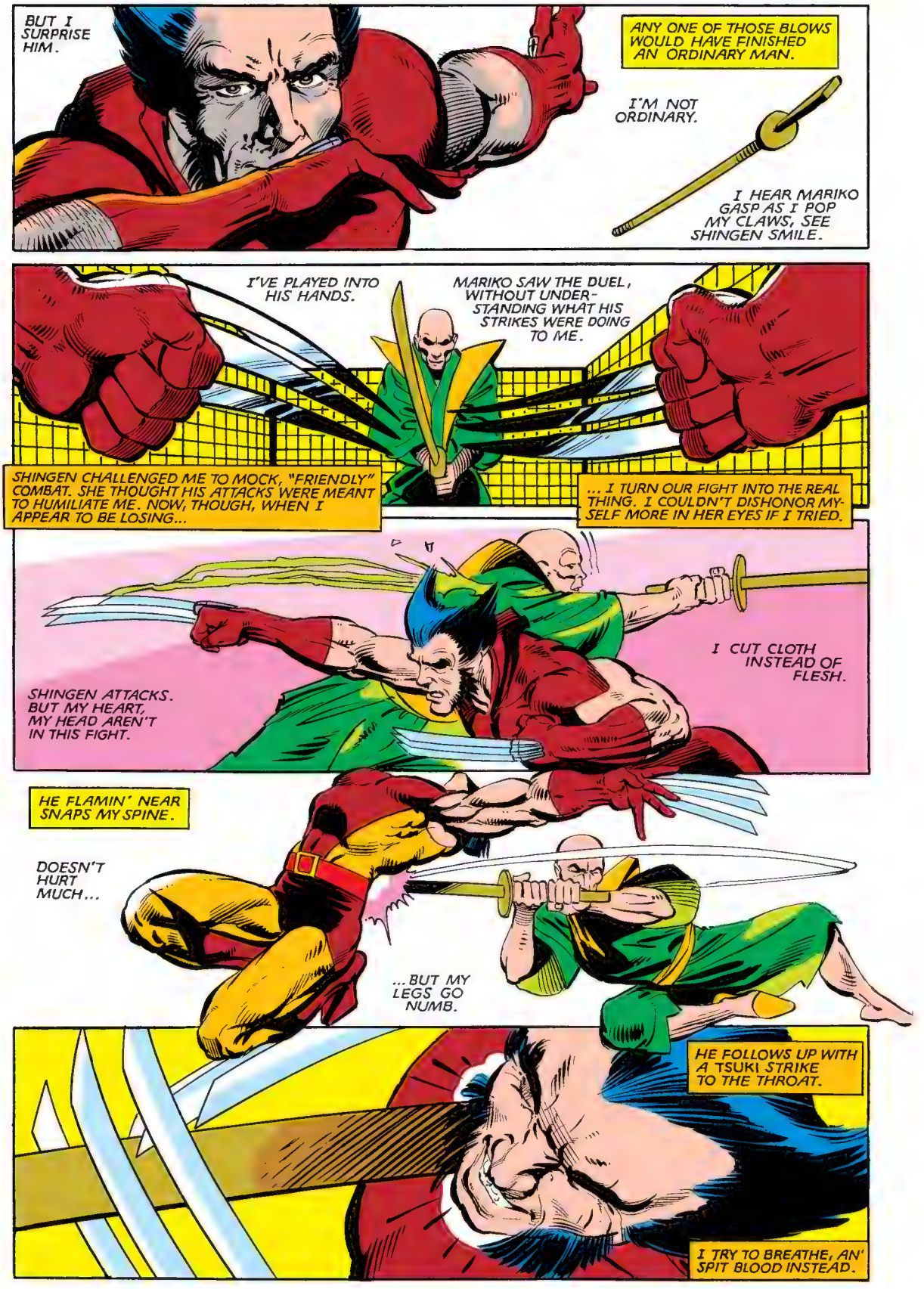

FOOTSTEPS.
AND A SCENT I'D NEVER SMELT BEFORE TONIGHT.
YET ONE I RECOGNIZE INSTANTLY.
IT CLINGS TO MARIKO, TAINTING THE JASMINE I LOVE.
A MAN.
MARIKO!
HER HUSBAND.
〈 WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?! YOU WERE TOLD TO AWAIT ME IN OUR APARTMENTS. IF YOU ARE DETERMINED TO DEFY ME, WIFE, YOU LEAVE ME NO CHOICE... 〉
〈... BUT TO CONTINUE TO CHASTISE YOU, UNTIL YOU LEARN--ONCE AND FOR ALL--YOUR PROPER PLACE. 〉

BUB, YOU'VE JUST SIGNED YOUR DEATH WARRANT!
〈 FOR THE LOVE YOU BEAR ME, DO NOT HARM HIM. 〉
〈 HE DESERVES IT. HE BEATS YOU, MARIKO. IF I DON'T STOP HIM, HE'LL KEEP ON DOING IT! 〉
〈 THAT IS HIS RIGHT. 〉
〈 PLEASE, LOGAN. 〉
I SHOULDN'T HAVE LISTENED.
BUT MARIKO KNOWS I CAN DENY HER NOTHING, NOT EVEN THE LIFE OF A MAN I HATE.
THERE'S A 10 a.m. J.A.L. FLIGHT OUT OF NARITA FOR NEW YORK.
I INTEND TO BE ON IT.
?!?
THUNK
THUNK
THUNK
THUNK
〈 LOGAN-- NO!! 〉
NO!!


THE SHURIKEN WERE POISONED, DESIGNED TO KILL ME.
BUT WHAT MAKES ME A MUTANT IS MY BODY'S ABILITY TO HEAL VIRTUALLY ANY WOUND, COUNTER-ACT ANY DISEASE. IT'S A NIFTY TALENT-- ESPECIALLY IN MY LINE OF WORK-- AN' IT'S SAVED ME MORE THAN ONCE.
EVEN SO, WHEN I FINALLY WAKE, I HURT LIKE BLAZES. THE STUFF THEY USED WAS POTENT. I BARELY MADE IT.
KOM-BAN WA, LOGAN-SAN. HAJIMEMASHITE. < GOOD EVENING, Mr. LOGAN. I AM PLEASED TO MEET YOU. >
WATAKUSHI-WA...
< I KNOW WHO YOU ARE, LORD SHINGEN. >
< LORD OF THE MANOR. LORD OF CLAN YASHIDA. MARIKO'S FATHER. >
YOUR JAPANESE IS AS FLAWLESS AS MY ENGLISH, WOLVERINE-- YES, I ALSO KNOW WHO AND WHAT YOU ARE--
-- BUT YOUR TONE IS RUDE, YOUR MANNER DISRESPECTFUL.
YUP.
THE POISON'S AFTER-EFFECTS SCRAMBLED MY SENSES-- ALL I'M SURE OF IS WHAT I CAN SEE. THE TWO SUMO ARE NO PROBLEM. WHAT WORRIES ME IS WHO'S WAITING OUTSIDE.
I CAN'T START ANY-THING WITH MARIKO PRESENT--TOO RISKY--SHE COULD GET HURT. I STALL. TIME IS ON MY SIDE.
IT RUNS OUT.
YOU ASPIRE TO MY DAUGHTER'S HAND. THE ARROGANCE OF YOU GAIJIN IS BEYOND BELIEF. OUR FAMILY IS AS OLD AS THE EMPEROR'S, WITH AS LEGITIMATE A CLAIM TO THE THRONE.

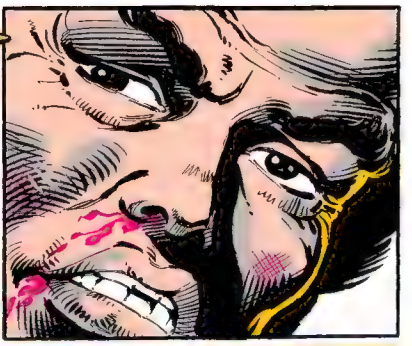

BUT I FORGET. WE LIVE IN AN AGE, IN A NATION, WHERE SUCH PRECEPTS HAVE BECOME AS EPHEMERAL AS THE MORNING DEW.
〈 FATHER, I BEG YOU... 〉
〈 BE SILENT CHILD. 〉
SHE THINKS THE WORLD OF YOU, WOLVERINE. LET US SEE YOU PROVE IT-- BY FACING AN OLD MAN IN SINGLE COMBAT.
WITH BOKAN, LORD SHINGEN--WOODEN PRACTICE SWORDS?
WHY NOT THE REAL THING?
TO BE FRANK...
...YOU ARE NOT WORTHY OF A TRUE SWORD.
SHINGEN'S GRACE BELIES HIS AGE. HE'S IN PERFECT CONDITION. I'M NOT.
I FIGURE THAT MAKES US EVEN.
IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE I HELD A SWORD. I WAS GOOD.
SHINGEN'S AN EXPERT.

AND HE CHEATS.
SO MUCH FOR "HONOR".
I ROLL WITH THE KICK, CURSING THE POISON FOR SLOWING MY REFLEXES. I'M VULNERABLE FOR ALL OF THREE SECONDS.
PLENTY OF TIME.
HE STRIKES THE NERVE CLUSTERS...
...THE CRUCIAL PRESSURE POINTS, WHERE A BLOW CAN EITHER INSTANTLY PARALYZE SOMEONE, OR KILL.
TOO LATE, I REALIZE...
...WHICH OF THEM HE'S GOING FOR.


BUT I SURPRISE HIM.
ANY ONE OF THOSE BLOWS WOULD HAVE FINISHED AN ORDINARY MAN.
I'M NOT ORDINARY.
I HEAR MARIKO GASP AS I POP MY CLAWS, SEE SHINGEN SMILE.
I'VE PLAYED INTO HIS HANDS.
MARIKO SAW THE DUEL, WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WHAT HIS STRIKES WERE DOING TO ME.
SHINGEN CHALLENGED ME TO MOCK, "FRIENDLY" COMBAT. SHE THOUGHT HIS ATTACKS WERE MEANT TO HUMILIATE ME. NOW, THOUGH, WHEN I APPEAR TO BE LOSING...
... I TURN OUR FIGHT INTO THE REAL THING. I COULDN'T DISHONOR MYSELF MORE IN HER EYES IF I TRIED.
SHINGEN ATTACKS. BUT MY HEART, MY HEAD AREN'T IN THIS FIGHT.
I CUT CLOTH INSTEAD OF FLESH.
HE FLAMIN' NEAR SNAPS MY SPINE.
DOESN'T HURT MUCH...
...BUT MY LEGS GO NUMB.
HE FOLLOWS UP WITH A TSUKI STRIKE TO THE THROAT.
I TRY TO BREATHE, AN' SPIT BLOOD INSTEAD.

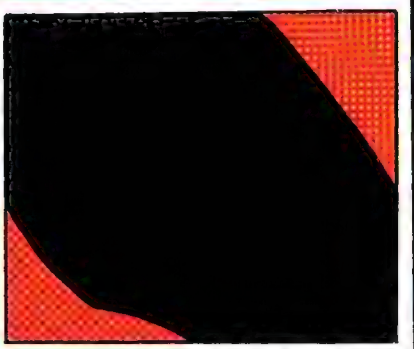
THINGS GET WORSE.
AND NO MATTER WHAT I DO...
...IT'S OBVIOUS TO ALL CONCERNED...

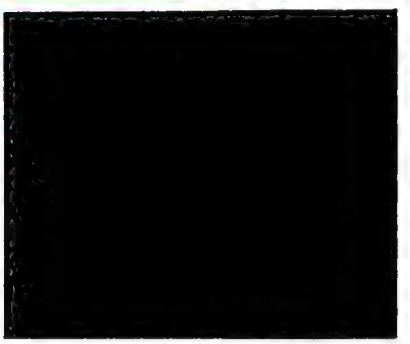
... THAT THE OUTCOME IS NEVER IN DOUBT.

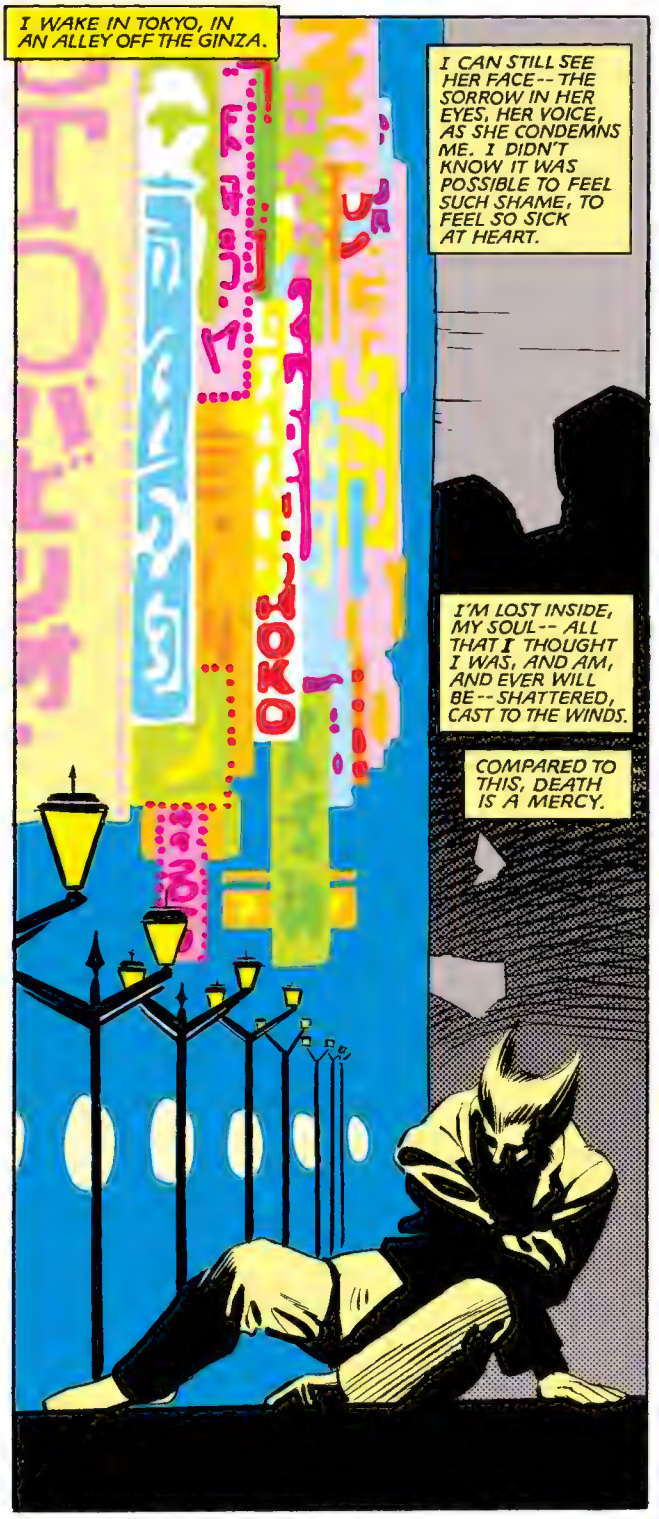


"BEHOLD, DAUGHTER," I HEAR SHINGEN SAY, THOUGH I SEE ONLY MARIKO, AS I STRUGGLE TO HOLD OFF OBLIVION, "THE 'MAN' YOU PROFESS TO LOVE. EXCEPT THAT HE IS *NO* MAN AT ALL, BUT AN *ANIMAL* CAST IN A SEMBLANCE OF HUMAN FORM.

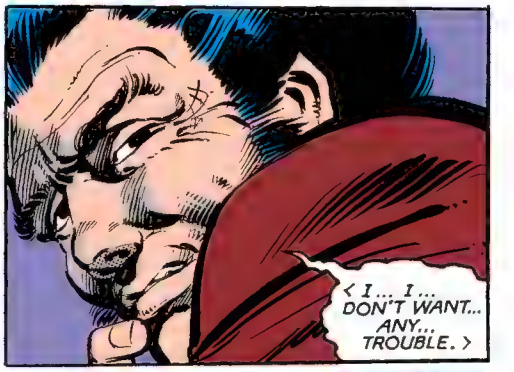
"GAZE UPON HIM, MARIKO. WITNESS HIS TRUE NATURE, HIS *TRUE* SELF. HERE IS THE... THING TO WHICH YOU HAVE GIVEN YOUR HEART. ANSWER ME TRUTHFULLY-- IS HE *WORTHY* OF SUCH A PRIZE?"



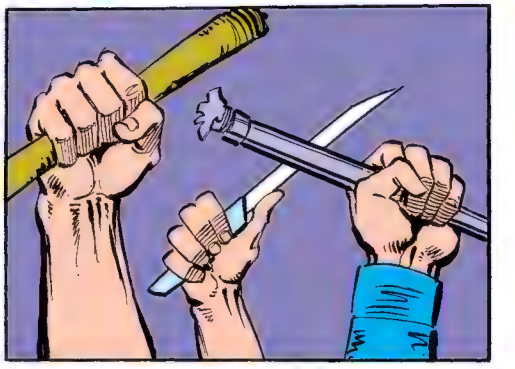


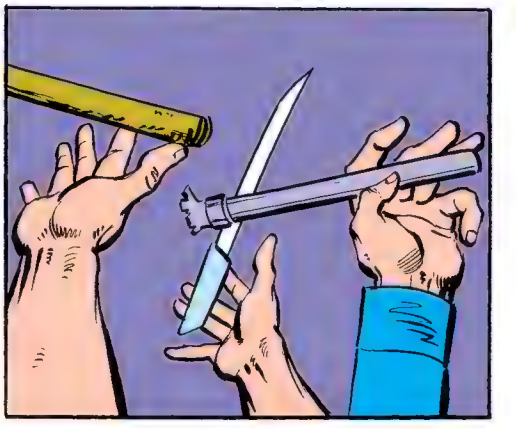

I WAKE IN TOKYO, IN AN ALLEY OFF THE GINZA.
I CAN STILL SEE HER FACE-- THE SORROW IN HER EYES, HER VOICE, AS SHE CONDEMNS ME. I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS POSSIBLE TO FEEL SUCH SHAME, TO FEEL SO SICK AT HEART.
I'M LOST INSIDE, MY SOUL-- ALL THAT I THOUGHT I WAS, AND AM, AND EVER WILL BE-- SHATTERED, CAST TO THE WINDS.
COMPARED TO THIS, DEATH IS A MERCY.

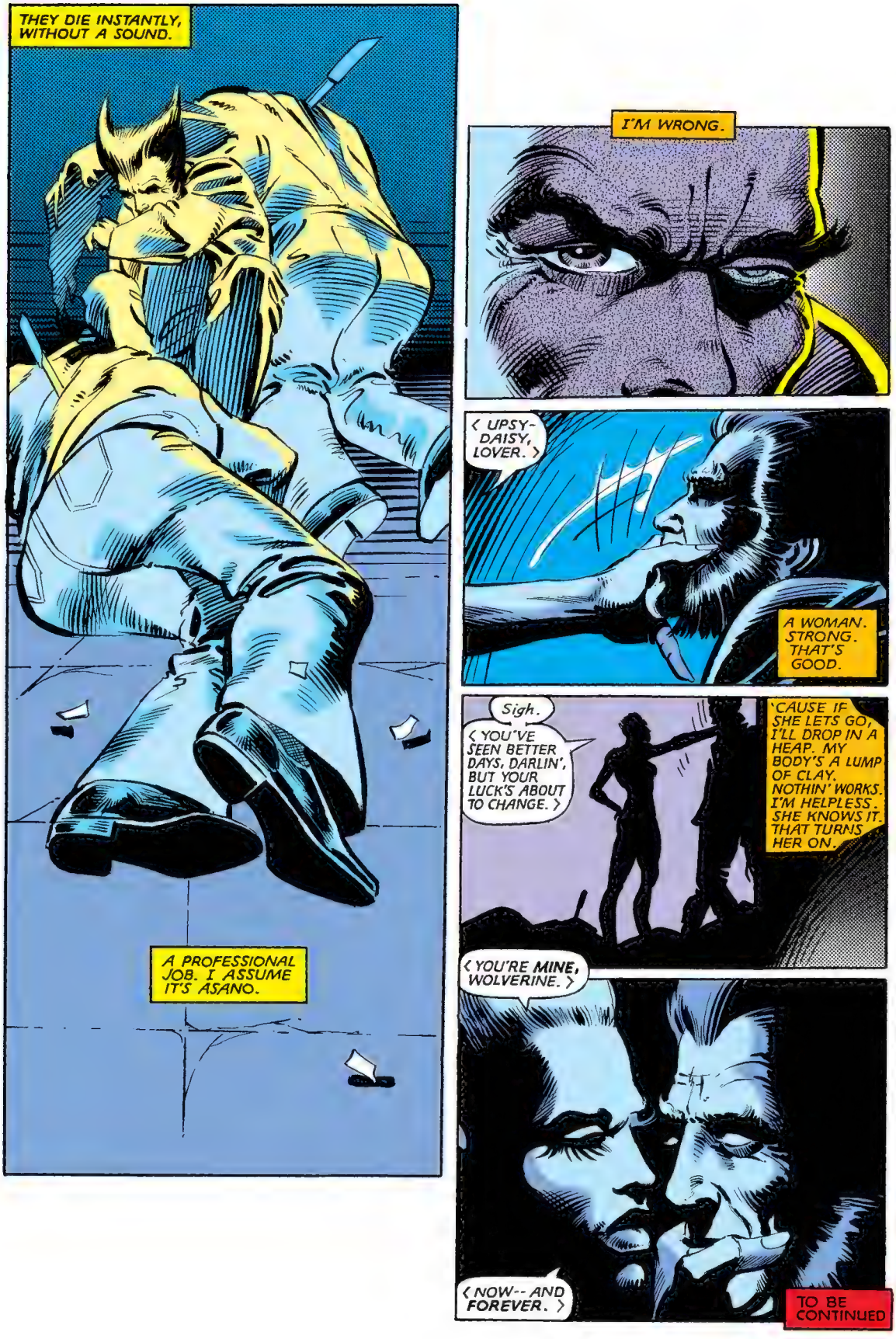
〈 WHAT HAVE WE HERE, MY BROTHERS? 〉
〈 LOST YOUR WAY, LITTLE GAIGIN? HAD A BIT TOO MUCH TO DRINK? TOO BAD. 〉
〈 THIS IS OUR COUNTRY, FOREIGNER. WE PREFER IT KEPT NEAT, CLEAN-- PURE! WE DON'T WANT IT SOILED WITH YOUR FILTH. 〉


〈 I... I... DON'T WANT... ANY... TROUBLE. 〉

〈 WE DO. 〉






THEY DIE INSTANTLY, WITHOUT A SOUND.
A PROFESSIONAL JOB. I ASSUME IT'S ASANO.
I'M WRONG.
〈 UPSY-DAISY, LOVER. 〉
A WOMAN. STRONG. THAT'S GOOD.
Sigh.
〈 YOU'VE SEEN BETTER DAYS, DARLIN', BUT YOUR LUCK'S ABOUT TO CHANGE. 〉
'CAUSE IF SHE LETS GO, I'LL DROP IN A HEAP. MY BODY'S A LUMP OF CLAY. NOTHIN' WORKS. I'M HELPLESS. SHE KNOWS IT. THAT TURNS HER ON.
〈 YOU'RE MINE, WOLVERINE. 〉
〈 NOW-- AND FOREVER. 〉
TO BE CONTINUED

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WOLVERINE™

A WOMAN'S VOICE. FAMILIAR, BUT I CAN'T QUITE PLACE IT. I WAKE SLOW-- A SURE SIGN THAT I'M HURTIN'-- NOT KNOWIN' WHERE I AM OR WHAT HAPPENED TO ME.

SHE SOUNDS FRANTIC, TERRIFIED-- AN' WHEN I OPEN MY EYES...

I TREAT 'EM ACCORDINGLY.

TROUBLE IS, THEY DIDN'T COME ALONE.

Stan Lee *PRESENTS...*

DEBTS AND OBLIGATIONS

CRIPES! YOU SURE KNOW HOW TO PICK YOUR ENEMIES, DARLIN'. WHO *ARE* THESE GUYS?!
THEY ARE CALLED THE *HAND*. THEY ARE PROFESSIONAL ASSASSINS.
I AM *YUKIO*, LOGAN-SAN.
YOU OWE ME YOUR LIFE.
I THINK I COULD'A GUESSED THAT.
BY THE WAY, HAVE WE MET?
THAT SO? WELL, HOLD ON, DARLIN'--
--'CAUSE HERE'S WHERE I RETURN THE COMPLIMENT!

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FRANK MILLER
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COLORIST
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LETTERER
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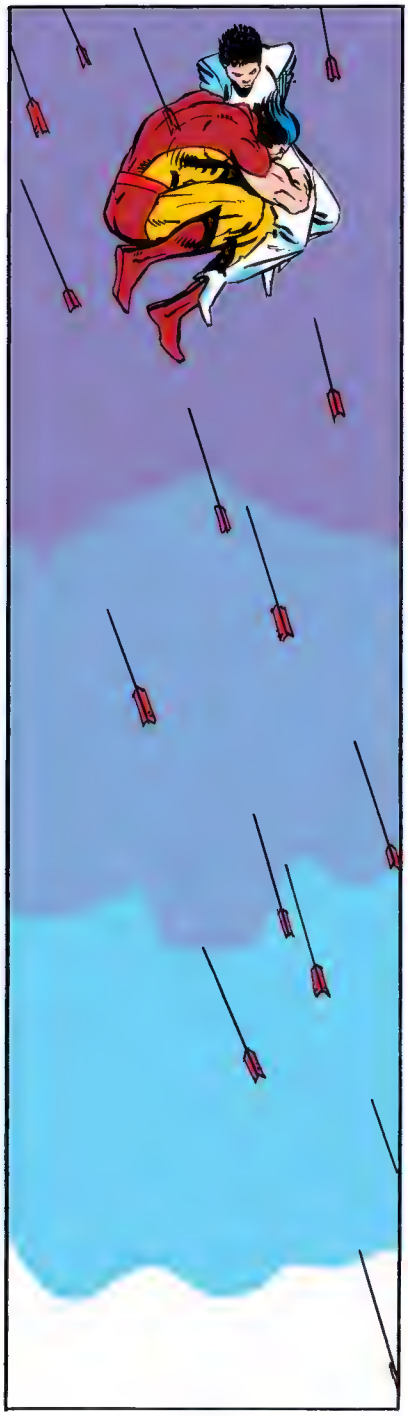


AS I MOVE-- AS ADRENALIN PUMPS THROUGH MY SYSTEM-- MY SKULL FINALLY KICKS INTO GEAR. THE CITY IS TOKYO. I'D COME HERE LOOKIN' FOR THE WOMAN I'D LOVED-- **MARIKO YASHIDA**-- AN' FOUND HER MARRIED TO ANOTHER MAN. FOR MY TROUBLES, I WAS BEATEN NEAR TO DEATH BY HER FATHER, **SHINGEN**.

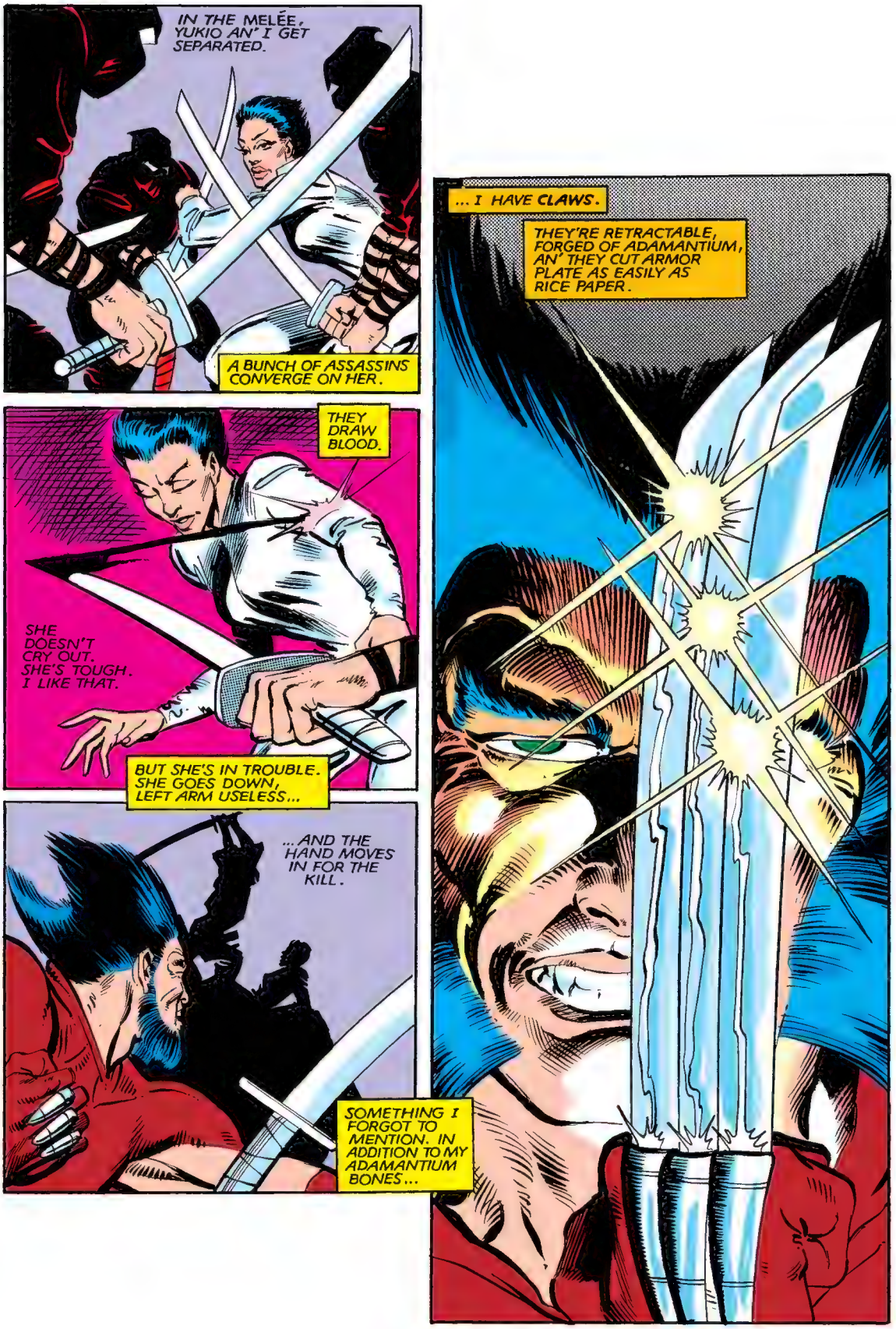
HE MEANT TO KILL ME, BUT HE HADN'T RECKONED WITH MY BODY'S MUTANT ABILITY TO HEAL ITSELF. THANKS TO THAT, I CAN SURVIVE PRETTY MUCH ANY INJURY.

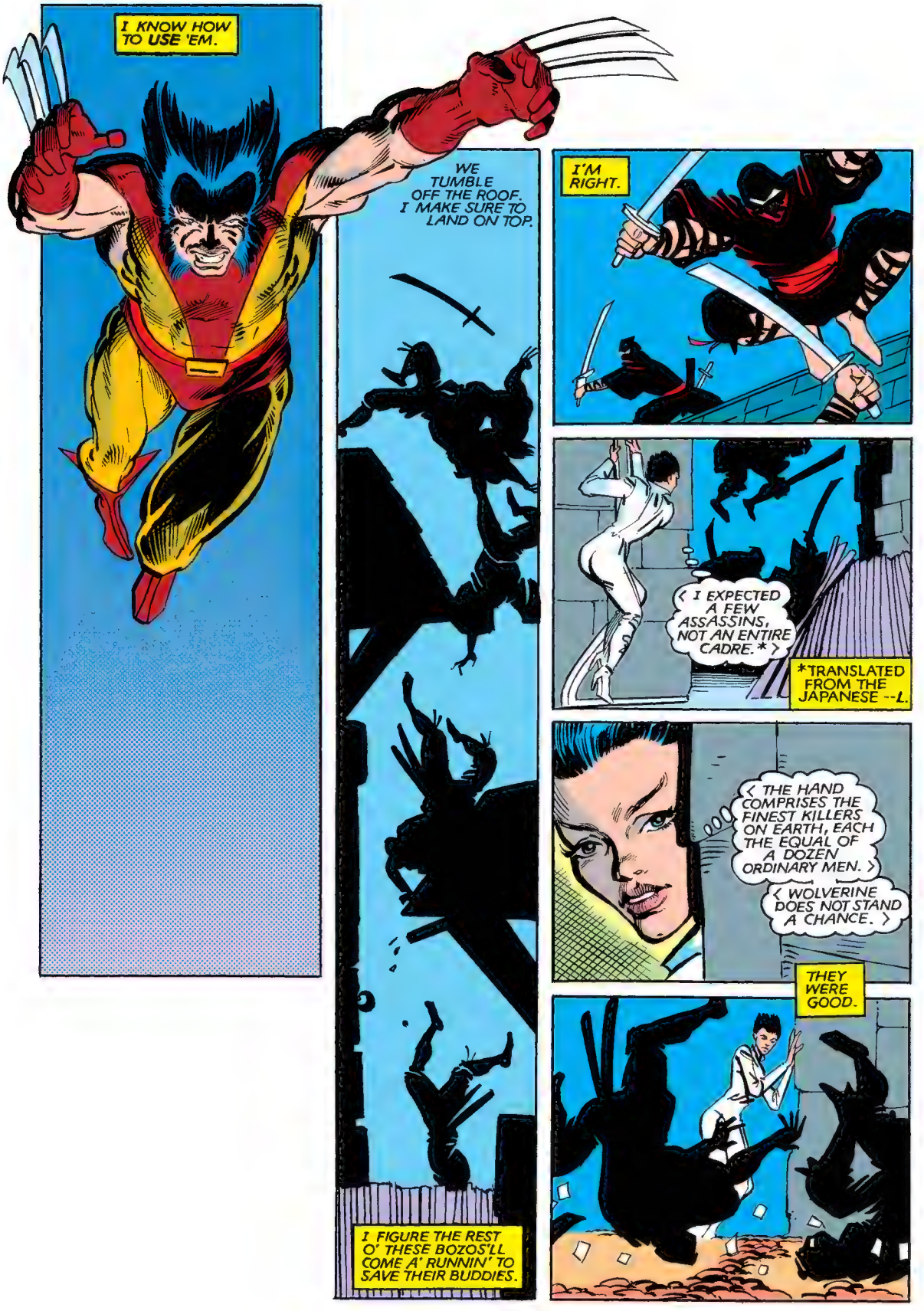
I ALSO HAVE ENHANCED PHYSICAL SENSES. I'M FAST, STRONG, MEAN-- HELL ON WHEELS.

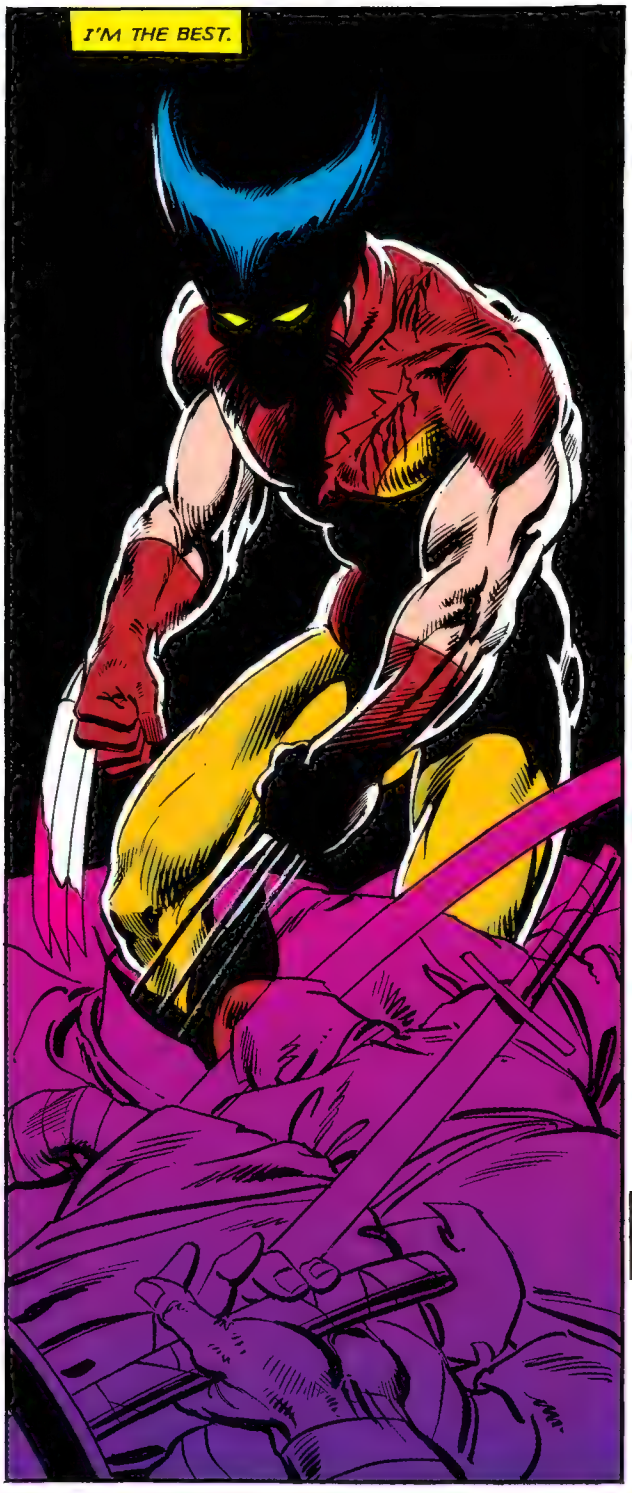
BUT SOME PEOPLE ARE NEVER SATISFIED. THEY LOVE TO TINKER, TO "IMPROVE" ON NATURE. IN MY CASE, THESE BRIGHT BOYS DECIDED TO LACE MY SKELETON WITH ADAMANTIUM...

... MAKIN' MY BONES VIRTUALLY UNBREAKABLE. PUNCHIN' ME IS LIKE HITTIN' SOLID STEEL.

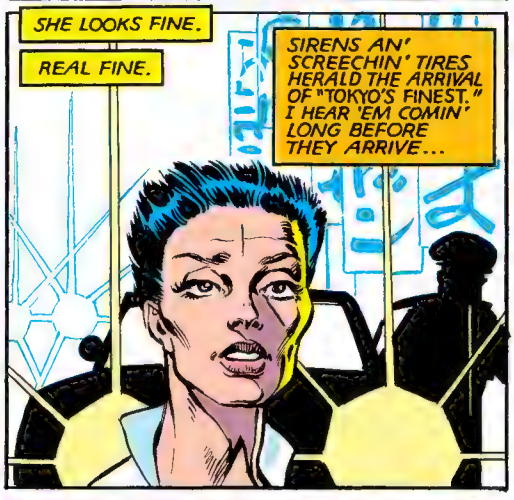
LIKEWISE, THE OTHER WAY 'ROUND.


IN THE MELÉE, YUKIO AN' I GET SEPARATED.
A BUNCH OF ASSASSINS CONVERGE ON HER.
THEY DRAW BLOOD.
SHE DOESN'T CRY OUT. SHE'S TOUGH. I LIKE THAT.
BUT SHE'S IN TROUBLE. SHE GOES DOWN, LEFT ARM USELESS...
...AND THE HAND MOVES IN FOR THE KILL.
SOMETHING I FORGOT TO MENTION. IN ADDITION TO MY ADAMANTIUM BONES...
...I HAVE CLAWS.
THEY'RE RETRACTABLE, FORGED OF ADAMANTIUM, AN' THEY CUT ARMOR PLATE AS EASILY AS RICE PAPER.

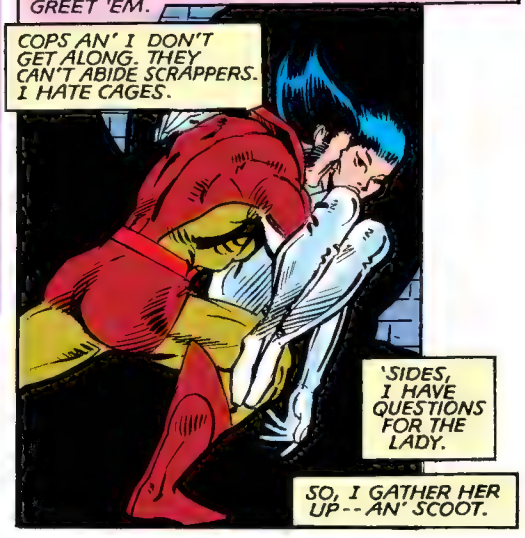

I KNOW HOW TO USE 'EM.
WE TUMBLE OFF THE ROOF. I MAKE SURE TO LAND ON TOP.
I FIGURE THE REST O' THESE BOZOS'LL COME A' RUNNIN' TO SAVE THEIR BUDDIES.
I'M RIGHT.
< I EXPECTED A FEW ASSASSINS, NOT AN ENTIRE CADRE.* >
*TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE --L.
< THE HAND COMPRISES THE FINEST KILLERS ON EARTH, EACH THE EQUAL OF A DOZEN ORDINARY MEN. >
< WOLVERINE DOES NOT STAND A CHANCE. >
THEY WERE GOOD.

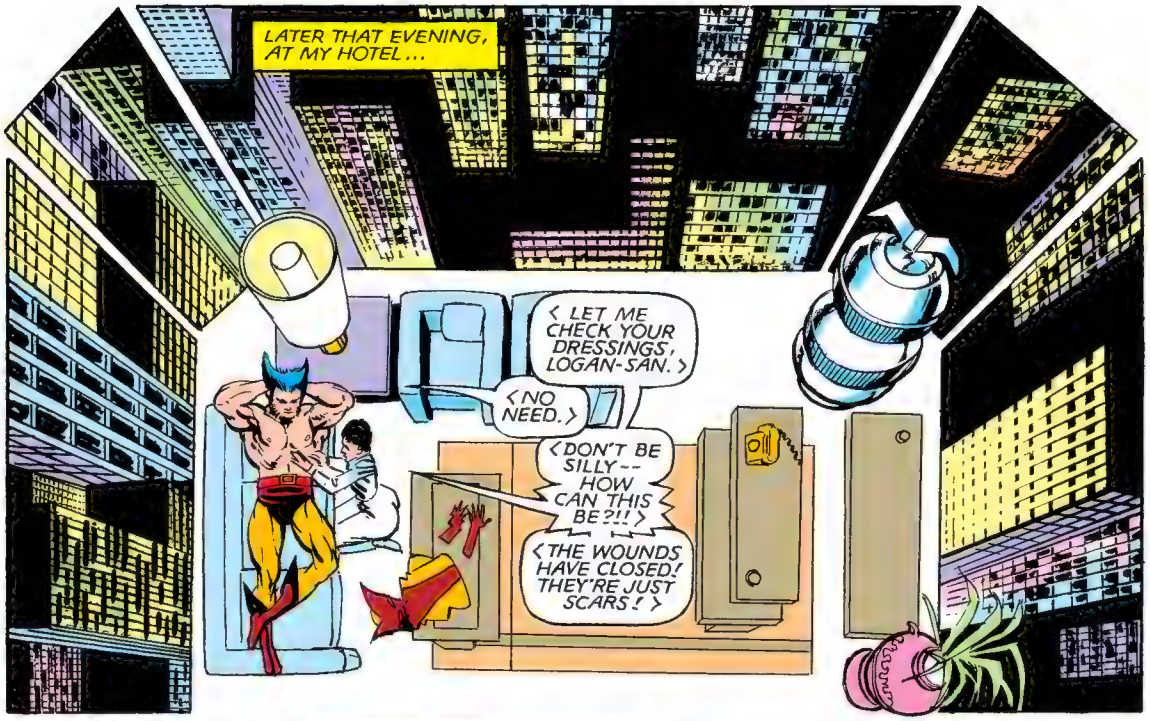


WHEN I WAS AN AGENT FOR CANADIAN INTELLIGENCE, SCRAPS LIKE THIS CAME WITH THE TERRITORY. I'D FORGOTTEN HOW MUCH I MISSED 'EM.

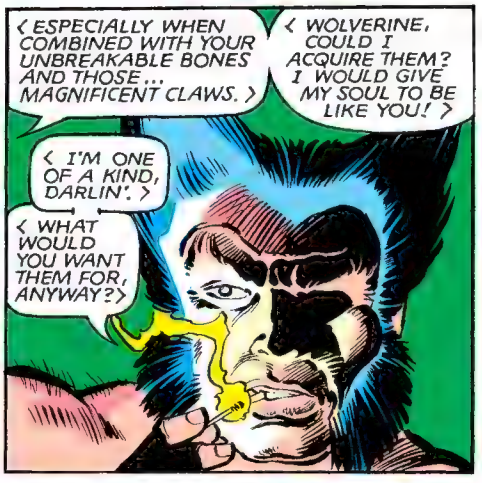

SHE LOOKS FINE.
REAL FINE.
SIRENS AN' SCREECHIN' TIRES HERALD THE ARRIVAL OF "TOKYO'S FINEST." I HEAR 'EM COMIN' LONG BEFORE THEY ARRIVE...

...AN' FIGURE IT'LL BE BETTER FOR ALL CONCERNED IF YUKIO AN' I AREN'T HERE TO GREET 'EM.


COPS AN' I DON'T GET ALONG. THEY CAN'T ABIDE SCRAPPERS. I HATE CAGES.
'SIDES, I HAVE QUESTIONS FOR THE LADY.
SO, I GATHER HER UP--AN' SCOOT.

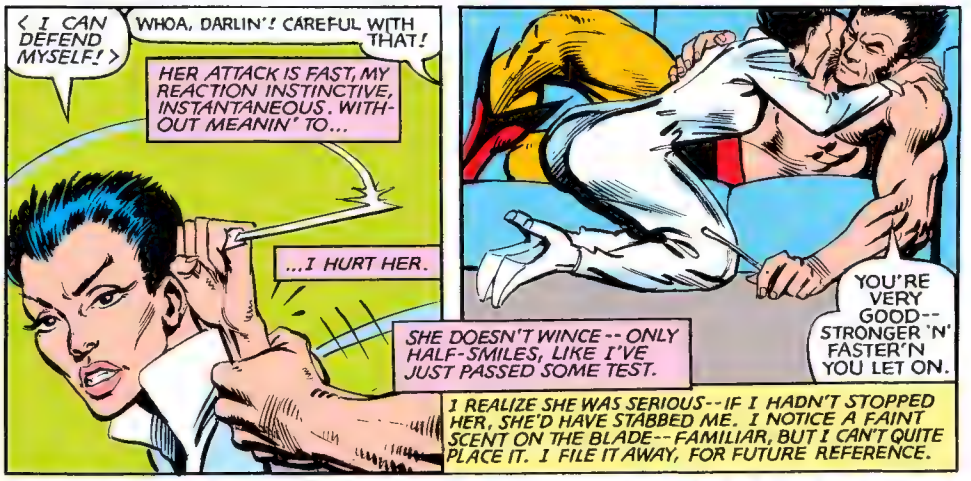

LATER THAT EVENING, AT MY HOTEL...
< LET ME CHECK YOUR DRESSINGS, LOGAN-SAN. >
< NO NEED. >
< DON'T BE SILLY -- HOW CAN THIS BE?!! >
< THE WOUNDS HAVE CLOSED! THEY'RE JUST SCARS! >

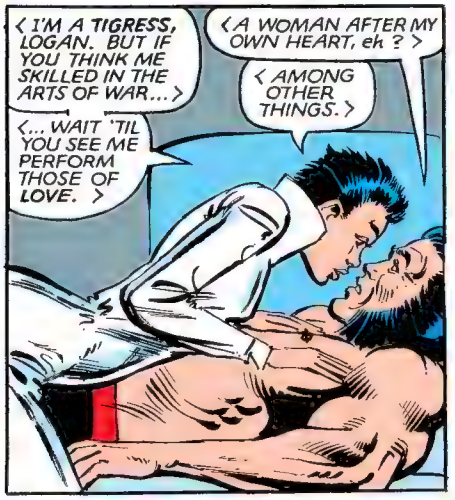
< I HEAL FAST. >
< THAT IS NO ANSWER. >
< IT'S TRUTH. >
< A USEFUL TALENT FOR A WARRIOR. >
YUP.

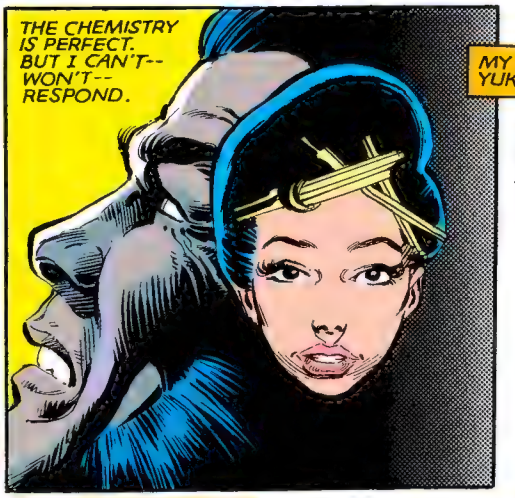

< ESPECIALLY WHEN COMBINED WITH YOUR UNBREAKABLE BONES AND THOSE... MAGNIFICENT CLAWS. >
< WOLVERINE, COULD I ACQUIRE THEM? I WOULD GIVE MY SOUL TO BE LIKE YOU! >
< I'M ONE OF A KIND, DARLIN'. >
< WHAT WOULD YOU WANT THEM FOR, ANYWAY? >

< TO DEFEND MYSELF. AND SLAY MY ENEMIES. >
< THE HAND? >
< HEI. AND THE BUTCHER WHO SENT THEM. >
< WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT, YUKIO? >
< THEIR MASTER IS A CRIMELORD OF AWESOME POWER AND INSATIABLE AMBITION. >

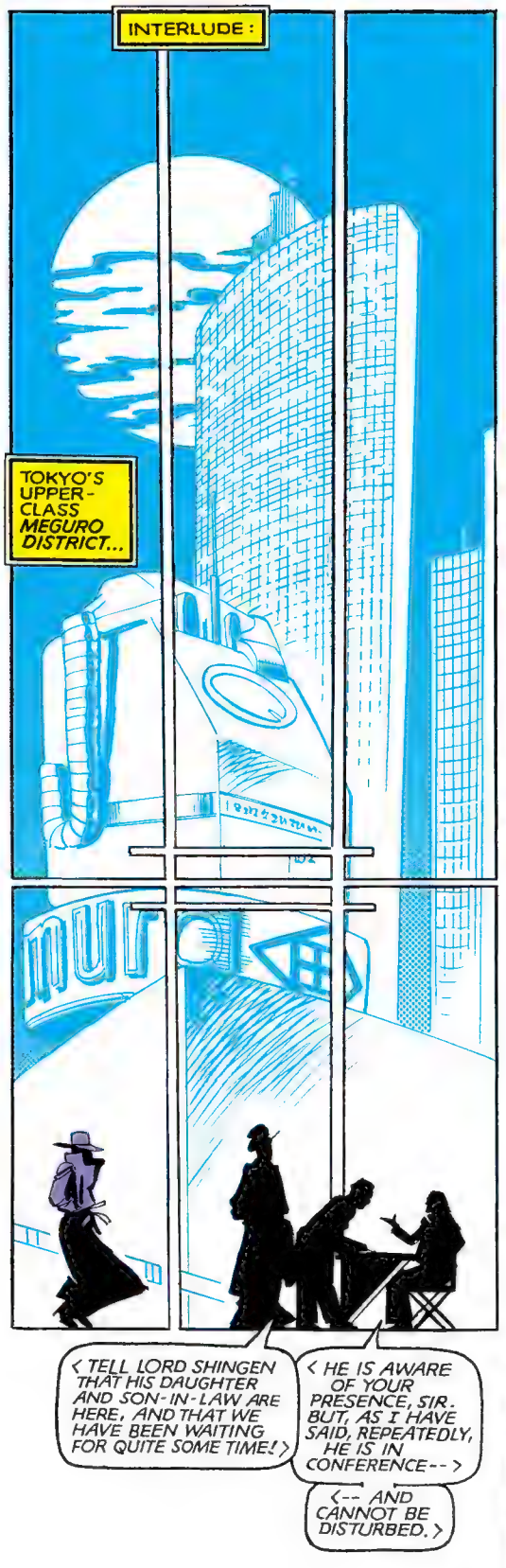
< HE DESIRES TO EXPAND HIS INFLUENCE FROM CRIME TO POLITICS. I BELIEVE HIS ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO RULE NIHON, TO BECOME THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE.
< I... FEAR HIM. >
< DON'T WORRY. SO LONG AS I'M AROUND, YOU'RE SAFE. >


< I CAN DEFEND MYSELF! >
WHOA, DARLIN'! CAREFUL WITH THAT!
HER ATTACK IS FAST, MY REACTION INSTINCTIVE, INSTANTANEOUS. WITHOUT MEANIN' TO...
...I HURT HER.
SHE DOESN'T WINCE -- ONLY HALF-SMILES, LIKE I'VE JUST PASSED SOME TEST.
YOU'RE VERY GOOD-- STRONGER 'N' FASTER'N YOU LET ON.
I REALIZE SHE WAS SERIOUS--IF I HADN'T STOPPED HER, SHE'D HAVE STABBED ME. I NOTICE A FAINT SCENT ON THE BLADE--FAMILIAR, BUT I CAN'T QUITE PLACE IT. I FILE IT AWAY, FOR FUTURE REFERENCE.

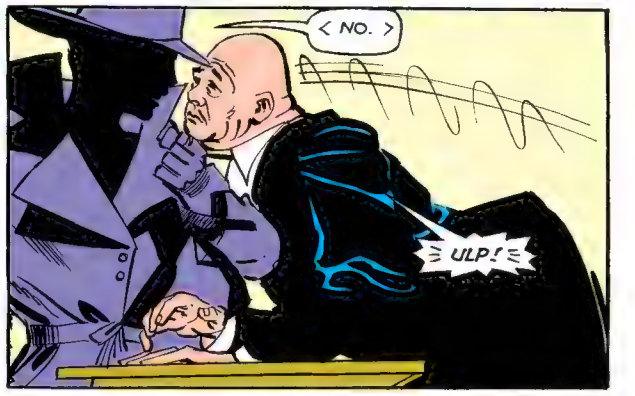


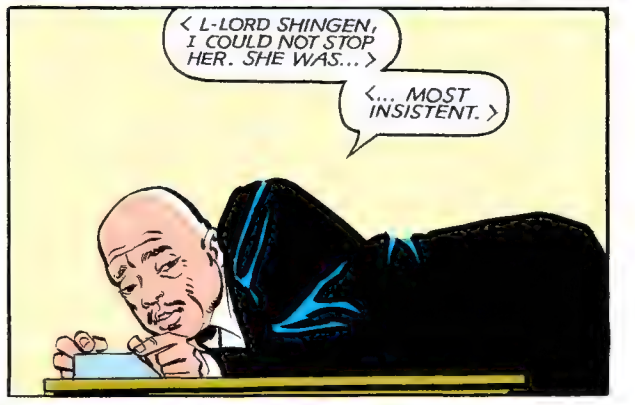


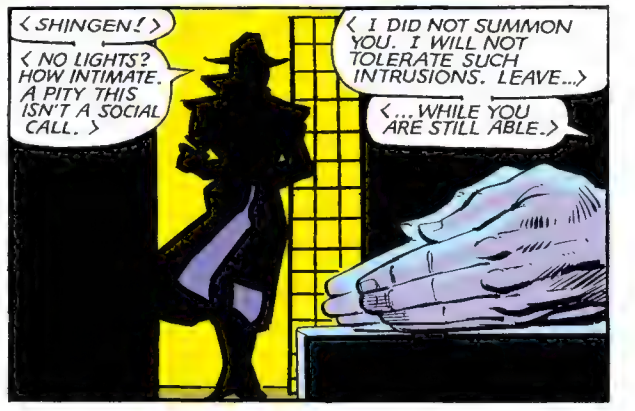
SHE HAS PRIDE, YET FOR ME SHE CHUCKS IT.


INTERLUDE :
TOKYO'S UPPER-CLASS MEGURO DISTRICT...
< TELL LORD SHINGEN THAT HIS DAUGHTER AND SON-IN-LAW ARE HERE, AND THAT WE HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR QUITE SOME TIME! >
< HE IS AWARE OF YOUR PRESENCE, SIR. BUT, AS I HAVE SAID, REPEATEDLY, HE IS IN CONFERENCE-- >
<-- AND CANNOT BE DISTURBED. >

< I WANT TO SEE SHINGEN. NOW. >
< PERHAPS I MAY BE OF SERVICE, YOUNG LADY. I AM LORD SHINGEN'S ASSOCIATE, NOBURU-HIDEKI. >
< Oh, YES--AND THIS, er, CHARMING WOMAN, IS MY WIFE, MARIKO. >
< DO YOU HAVE AN APPOINTMENT? >

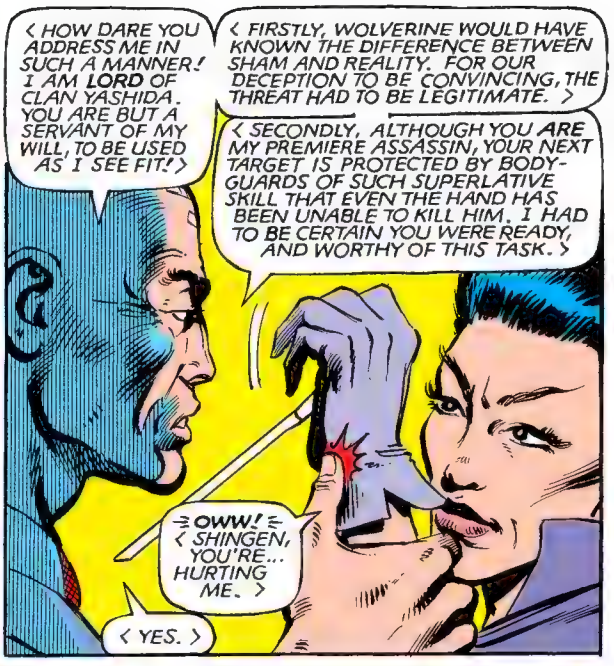

< NO. >
ULP!


< L-LORD SHINGEN, I COULD NOT STOP HER. SHE WAS... >
<... MOST INSISTENT. >

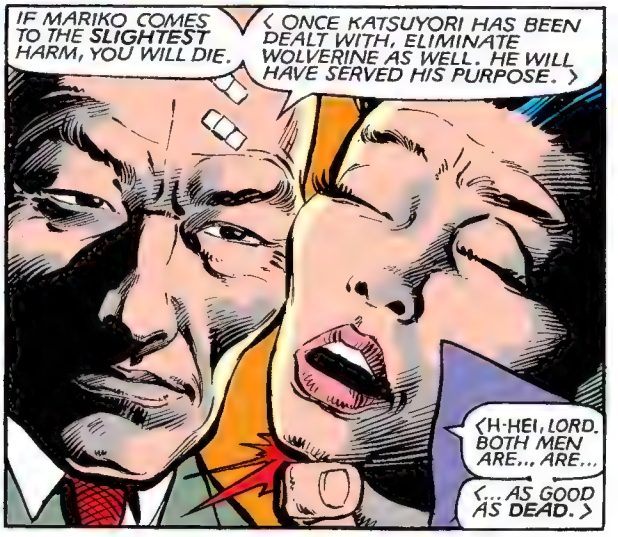

< SHINGEN! >
< NO LIGHTS? HOW INTIMATE. A PITY THIS ISN'T A SOCIAL CALL. >
< I DID NOT SUMMON YOU. I WILL NOT TOLERATE SUCH INTRUSIONS. LEAVE...>
<...WHILE YOU ARE STILL ABLE.>

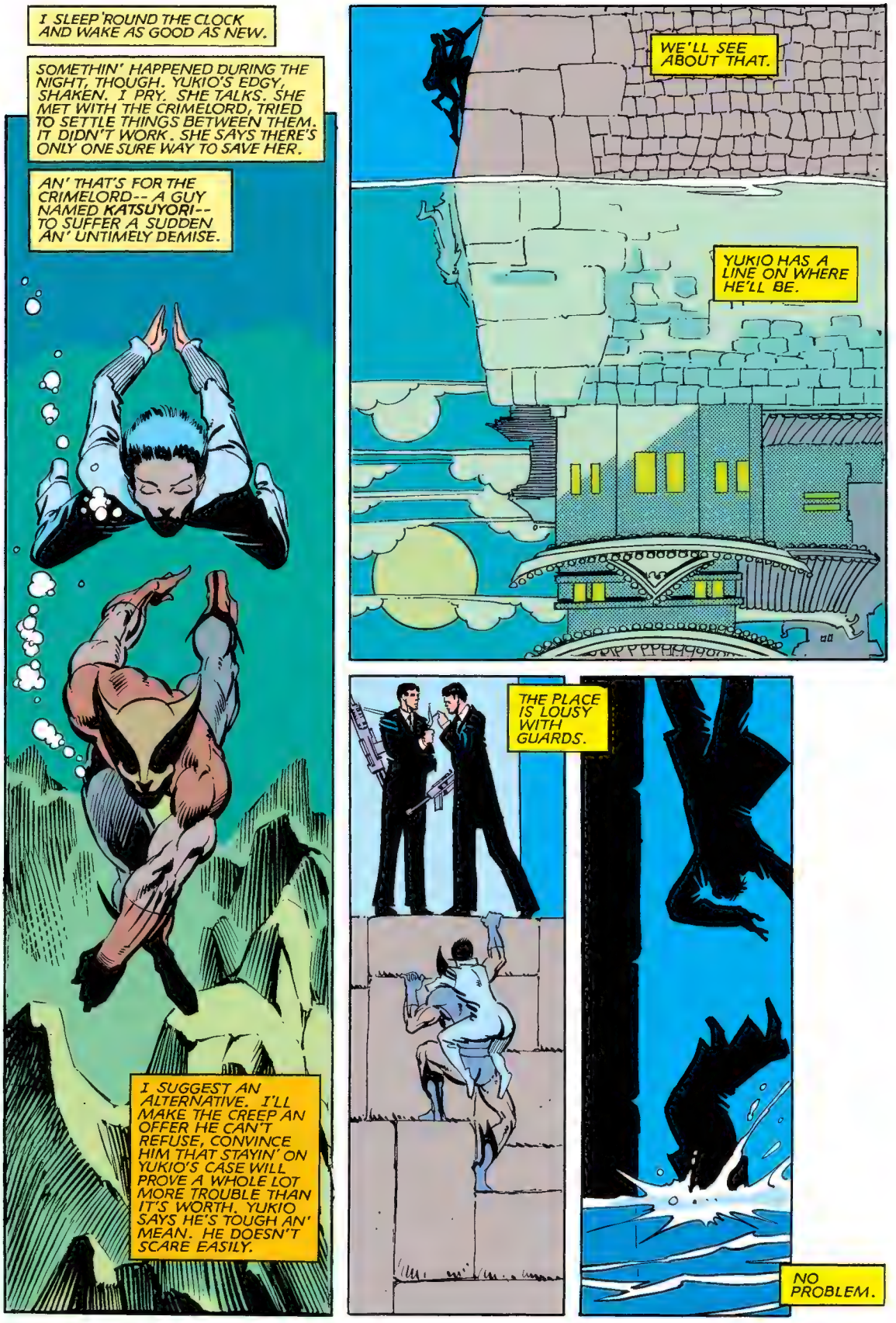
< WHO'S GOING TO THROW ME OUT, OLD MAN? YOU?! >
< SO BE IT, WILD ONE. >
KLAK
< YOU HAVE CHOSEN YOUR PATH. NOW YOU MUST WALK IT. >
< BY THAT SLIDING PANEL-- >
<-- ONE OF THE HAND! >
SLASSSSSH!
KUDD!
< GOTCHA! >

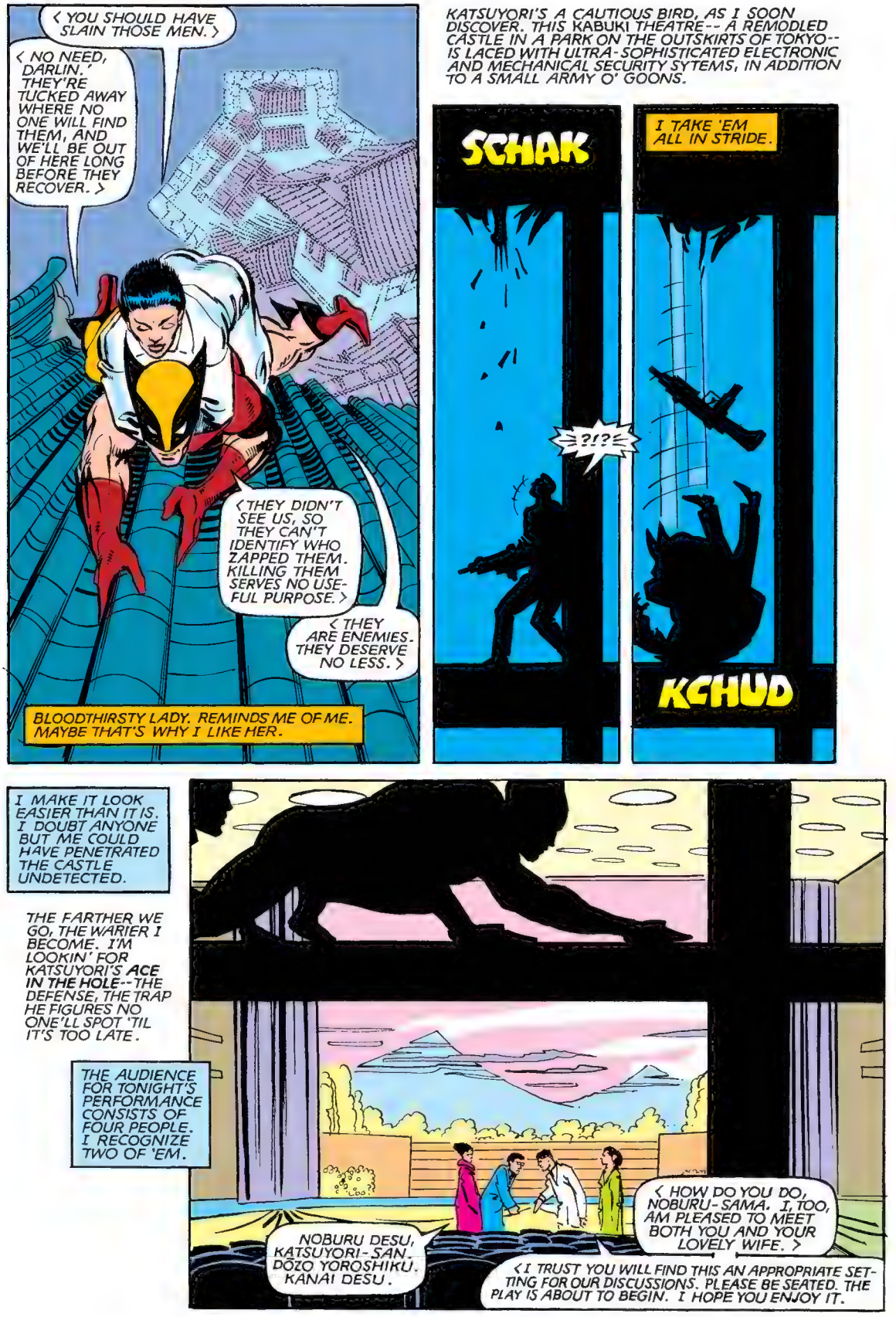
〈 WHY DON'T YOU KILL HIM ? 〉
〈 WERE YOUR POSITIONS REVERSED, YOUR SOUL WOULD HAVE LONG-SINCE DEPARTED TO JOIN THE GODDESS AMATERSU IN HEAVEN. 〉
〈TRUE, BUT NOW HE HAS TO LIVE WITH THE MEMORY THAT I BEAT HIM. DEATH WOULD BE A MERCIFUL RELEASE.〉
〈 I'VE SERVED YOU FAITHFULLY, SHINGEN, YET YOU SENT THE HAND TO KILL ME TONIGHT. THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A DECEPTION--TO WIN ME WOLVERINE'S SYMPATHY AND HIS AID--BUT THE HAND WAS PLAYING FOR REAL! 〉
〈 BE VERY CAREFUL, DAIMYO. I AM A DANGEROUS LADY. YOU WOULDN'T LIKE ME FOR AN ENEMY. 〉

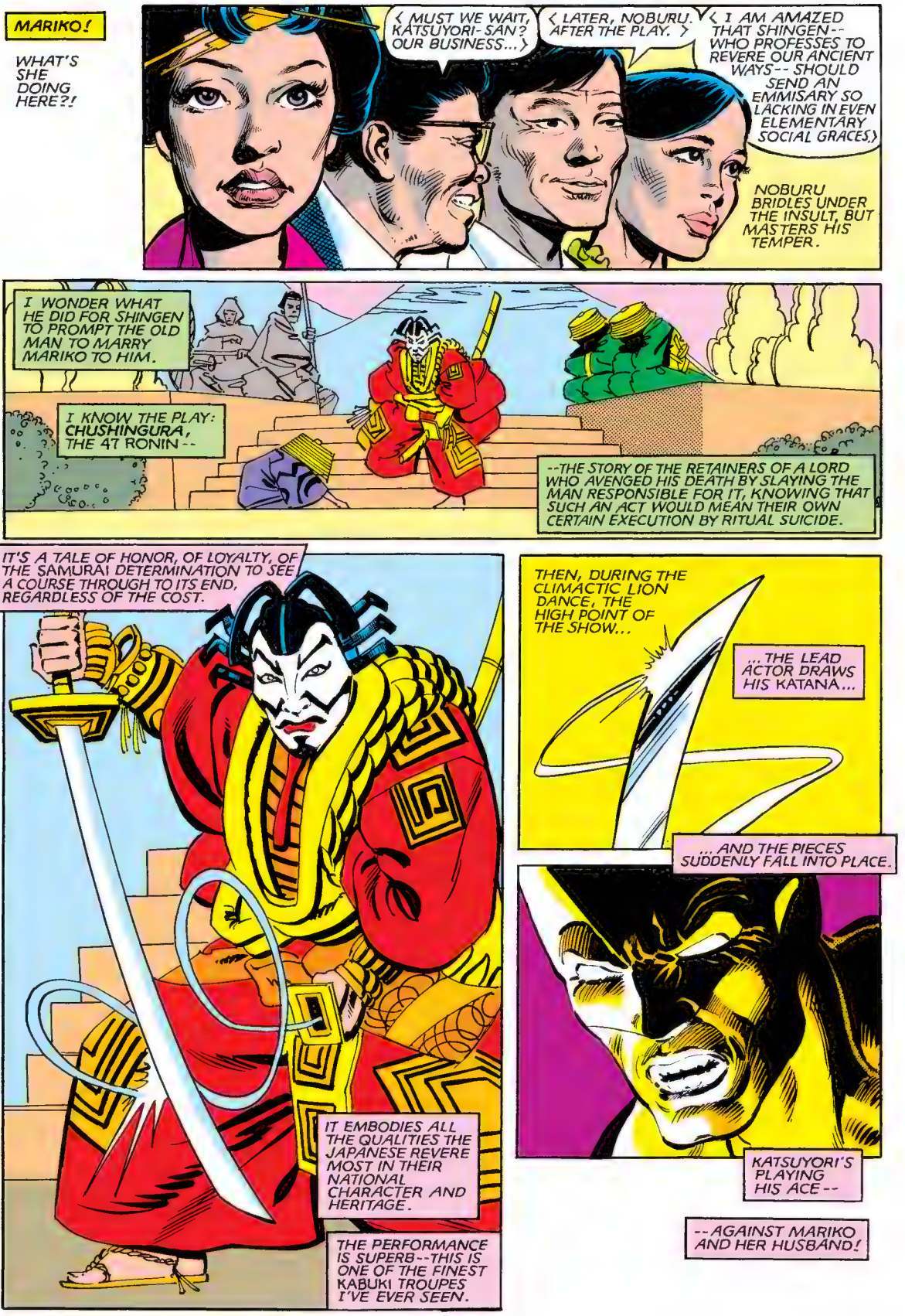

〈 HOW DARE YOU ADDRESS ME IN SUCH A MANNER! I AM LORD OF CLAN YASHIDA. YOU ARE BUT A SERVANT OF MY WILL, TO BE USED AS I SEE FIT! 〉
〈 FIRSTLY, WOLVERINE WOULD HAVE KNOWN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SHAM AND REALITY. FOR OUR DECEPTION TO BE CONVINCING, THE THREAT HAD TO BE LEGITIMATE. 〉
〈 SECONDLY, ALTHOUGH YOU ARE MY PREMIERE ASSASSIN, YOUR NEXT TARGET IS PROTECTED BY BODY-GUARDS OF SUCH SUPERLATIVE SKILL THAT EVEN THE HAND HAS BEEN UNABLE TO KILL HIM. I HAD TO BE CERTAIN YOU WERE READY, AND WORTHY OF THIS TASK. 〉
OWW! 〈 SHINGEN, YOU'RE... HURTING ME. 〉
〈 YES. 〉

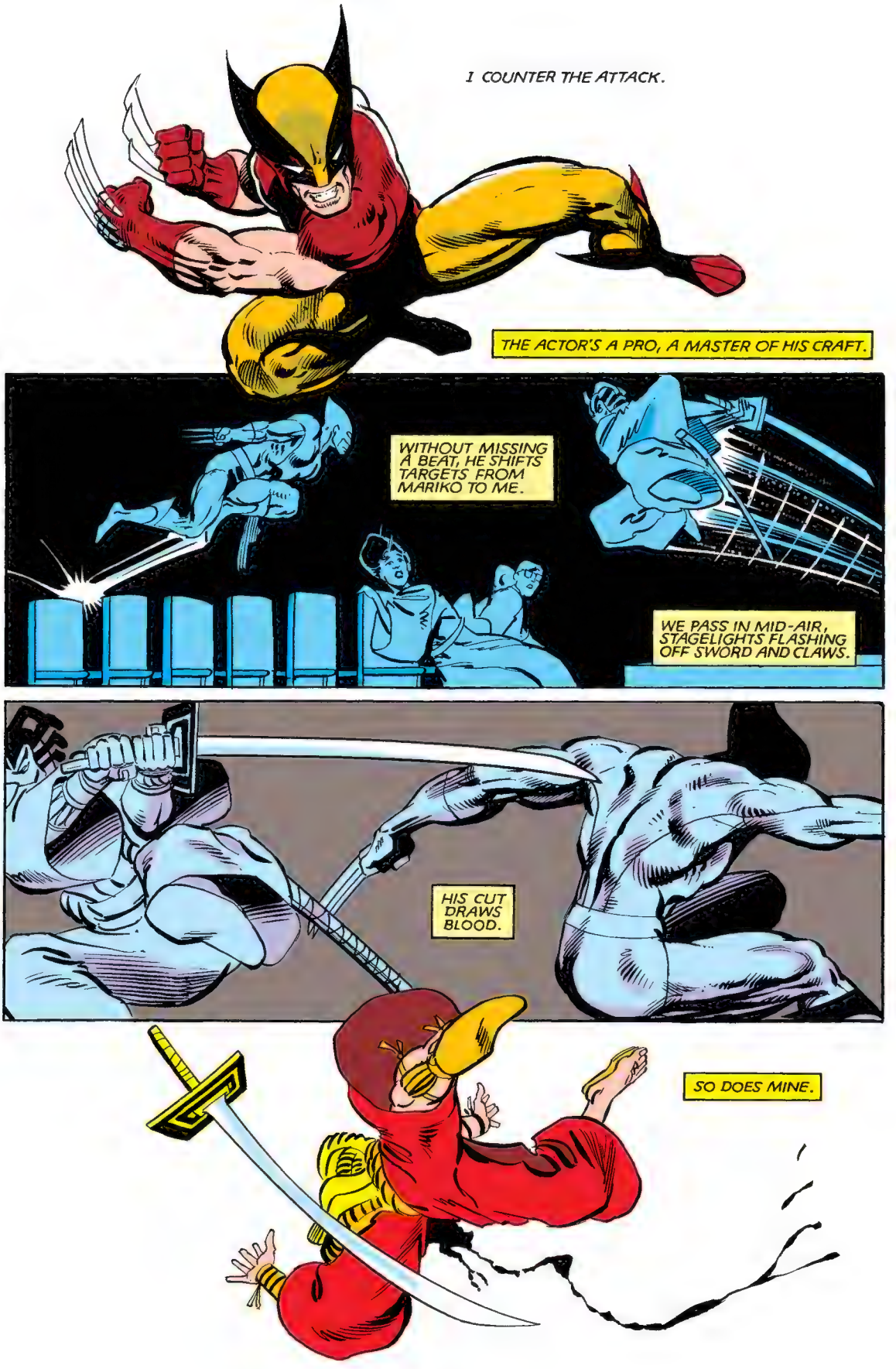
〈 I HAVE ARRANGED A "PEACE CONFERENCE" WITH KATSUYORI. MY REPRESENTATIVES WILL BE MARIKO AND NOBURU. HE BELIEVES I WILL NOT PLACE MY DAUGHTER IN JEOPARDY. HE WILL THINK HIMSELF SAFE. THEN AND THERE, YOU WILL STRIKE. 〉
〈 BUT SUPPOSE SOME-THING GOES WRONG? 〉


IF MARIKO COMES TO THE SLIGHTEST HARM, YOU WILL DIE.
〈 ONCE KATSUYORI HAS BEEN DEALT WITH, ELIMINATE WOLVERINE AS WELL. HE WILL HAVE SERVED HIS PURPOSE. 〉
〈 H-HEI, LORD. BOTH MEN ARE... ARE...
〈... AS GOOD AS DEAD. 〉


I SLEEP 'ROUND THE CLOCK AND WAKE AS GOOD AS NEW.
SOMETHIN' HAPPENED DURING THE NIGHT, THOUGH. YUKIO'S EDGY, SHAKEN. I PRY. SHE TALKS. SHE MET WITH THE CRIMELORD, TRIED TO SETTLE THINGS BETWEEN THEM. IT DIDN'T WORK. SHE SAYS THERE'S ONLY ONE SURE WAY TO SAVE HER.
AN' THAT'S FOR THE CRIMELORD-- A GUY NAMED KATSUYORI-- TO SUFFER A SUDDEN AN' UNTIMELY DEMISE.
I SUGGEST AN ALTERNATIVE. I'LL MAKE THE CREEP AN OFFER HE CAN'T REFUSE, CONVINCE HIM THAT STAYIN' ON YUKIO'S CASE WILL PROVE A WHOLE LOT MORE TROUBLE THAN IT'S WORTH. YUKIO SAYS HE'S TOUGH AN' MEAN. HE DOESN'T SCARE EASILY.
WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT.
YUKIO HAS A LINE ON WHERE HE'LL BE.
THE PLACE IS LOUSY WITH GUARDS.
NO PROBLEM.

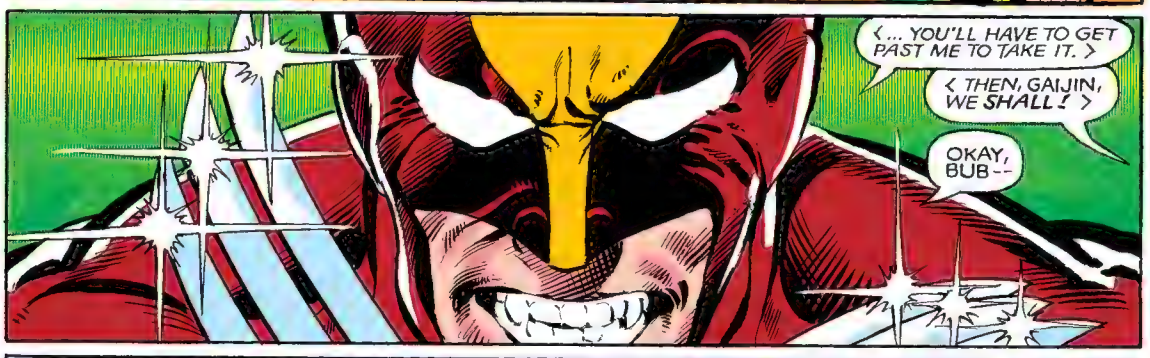

< YOU SHOULD HAVE SLAIN THOSE MEN. >
< NO NEED, DARLIN.' THEY'RE TUCKED AWAY WHERE NO ONE WILL FIND THEM, AND WE'LL BE OUT OF HERE LONG BEFORE THEY RECOVER. >
< THEY DIDN'T SEE US, SO THEY CAN'T IDENTIFY WHO ZAPPED THEM. KILLING THEM SERVES NO USEFUL PURPOSE. >
< THEY ARE ENEMIES. THEY DESERVE NO LESS. >
BLOODTHIRSTY LADY. REMINDS ME OF ME. MAYBE THAT'S WHY I LIKE HER.
KATSUYORI'S A CAUTIOUS BIRD, AS I SOON DISCOVER. THIS KABUKI THEATRE-- A REMODLED CASTLE IN A PARK ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOKYO-- IS LACED WITH ULTRA-SOPHISTICATED ELECTRONIC AND MECHANICAL SECURITY SYTEMS, IN ADDITION TO A SMALL ARMY O' GOONS.
SCHAK
=?!?=
I TAKE 'EM ALL IN STRIDE.
KCHUD
I MAKE IT LOOK EASIER THAN IT IS. I DOUBT ANYONE BUT ME COULD HAVE PENETRATED THE CASTLE UNDETECTED.
THE FARTHER WE GO, THE WARIER I BECOME. I'M LOOKIN' FOR KATSUYORI'S **ACE IN THE HOLE**--THE DEFENSE, THE TRAP HE FIGURES NO ONE'LL SPOT 'TIL IT'S TOO LATE.
THE AUDIENCE FOR TONIGHT'S PERFORMANCE CONSISTS OF FOUR PEOPLE. I RECOGNIZE TWO OF 'EM.
NOBURU DESU, KATSUYORI-SAN. DŌZO YOROSHIKU. KANAI DESU.
< HOW DO YOU DO, NOBURU-SAMA. I, TOO, AM PLEASED TO MEET BOTH YOU AND YOUR LOVELY WIFE. >
< I TRUST YOU WILL FIND THIS AN APPROPRIATE SETTING FOR OUR DISCUSSIONS. PLEASE BE SEATED. THE PLAY IS ABOUT TO BEGIN. I HOPE YOU ENJOY IT.

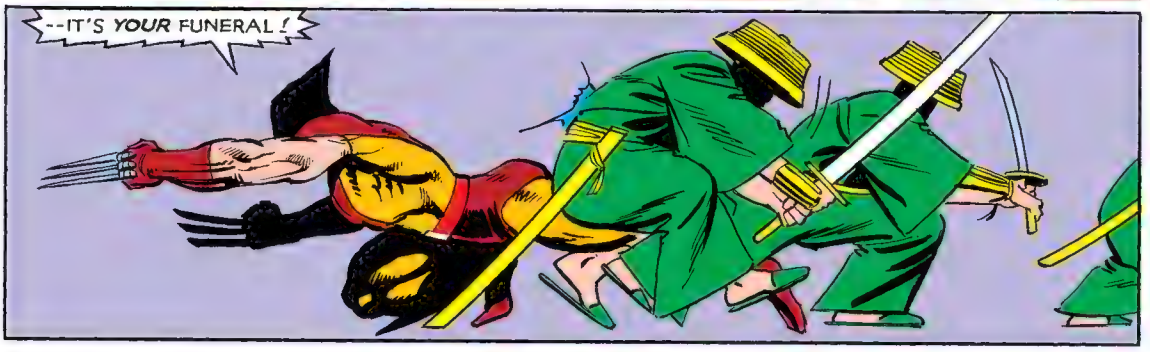

MARIKO!
WHAT'S SHE DOING HERE?!
< MUST WE WAIT, KATSUYORI-SAN? OUR BUSINESS... >
< LATER, NOBURU. AFTER THE PLAY. >
< I AM AMAZED THAT SHINGEN-- WHO PROFESSES TO REVERE OUR ANCIENT WAYS-- SHOULD SEND AN EMMISARY SO LACKING IN EVEN ELEMENTARY SOCIAL GRACES. >
NOBURU BRIDLES UNDER THE INSULT, BUT MASTERS HIS TEMPER.
I WONDER WHAT HE DID FOR SHINGEN TO PROMPT THE OLD MAN TO MARRY MARIKO TO HIM.
I KNOW THE PLAY: CHUSHINGURA, THE 47 RONIN--
--THE STORY OF THE RETAINERS OF A LORD WHO AVENGED HIS DEATH BY SLAYING THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR IT, KNOWING THAT SUCH AN ACT WOULD MEAN THEIR OWN CERTAIN EXECUTION BY RITUAL SUICIDE.
IT'S A TALE OF HONOR, OF LOYALTY, OF THE SAMURAI DETERMINATION TO SEE A COURSE THROUGH TO ITS END, REGARDLESS OF THE COST.
IT EMBODIES ALL THE QUALITIES THE JAPANESE REVERE MOST IN THEIR NATIONAL CHARACTER AND HERITAGE.
THE PERFORMANCE IS SUPERB--THIS IS ONE OF THE FINEST KABUKI TROUPES I'VE EVER SEEN.
THEN, DURING THE CLIMACTIC LION DANCE, THE HIGH POINT OF THE SHOW...
... THE LEAD ACTOR DRAWS HIS KATANA...
... AND THE PIECES SUDDENLY FALL INTO PLACE.
KATSUYORI'S PLAYING HIS ACE--
--AGAINST MARIKO AND HER HUSBAND!

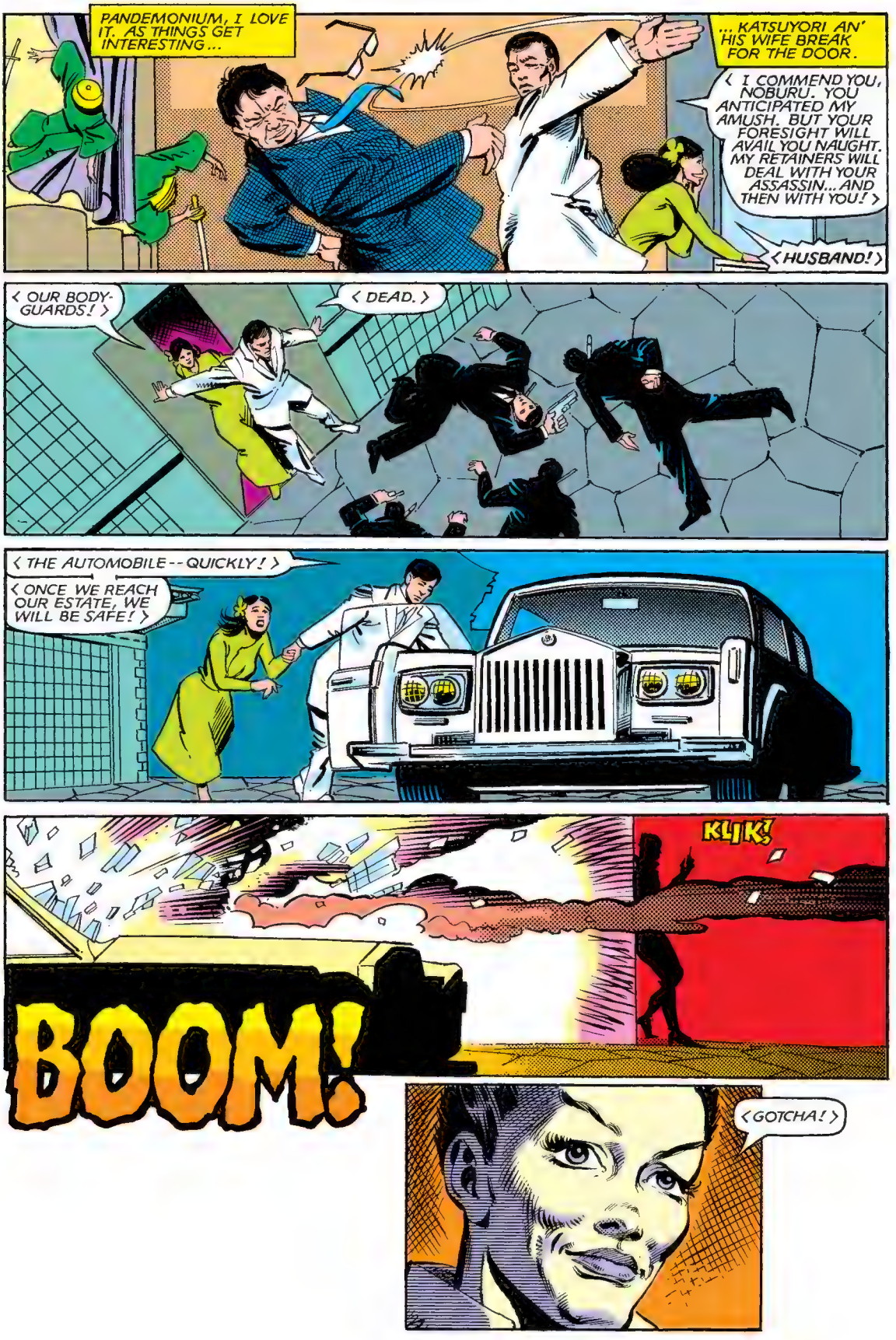

1 COUNTER THE ATTACK.
THE ACTOR'S A PRO, A MASTER OF HIS CRAFT.
WITHOUT MISSING A BEAT, HE SHIFTS TARGETS FROM MARIKO TO ME.
WE PASS IN MID-AIR, STAGELIGHTS FLASHING OFF SWORD AND CLAWS.
HIS CUT DRAWS BLOOD.
SO DOES MINE.

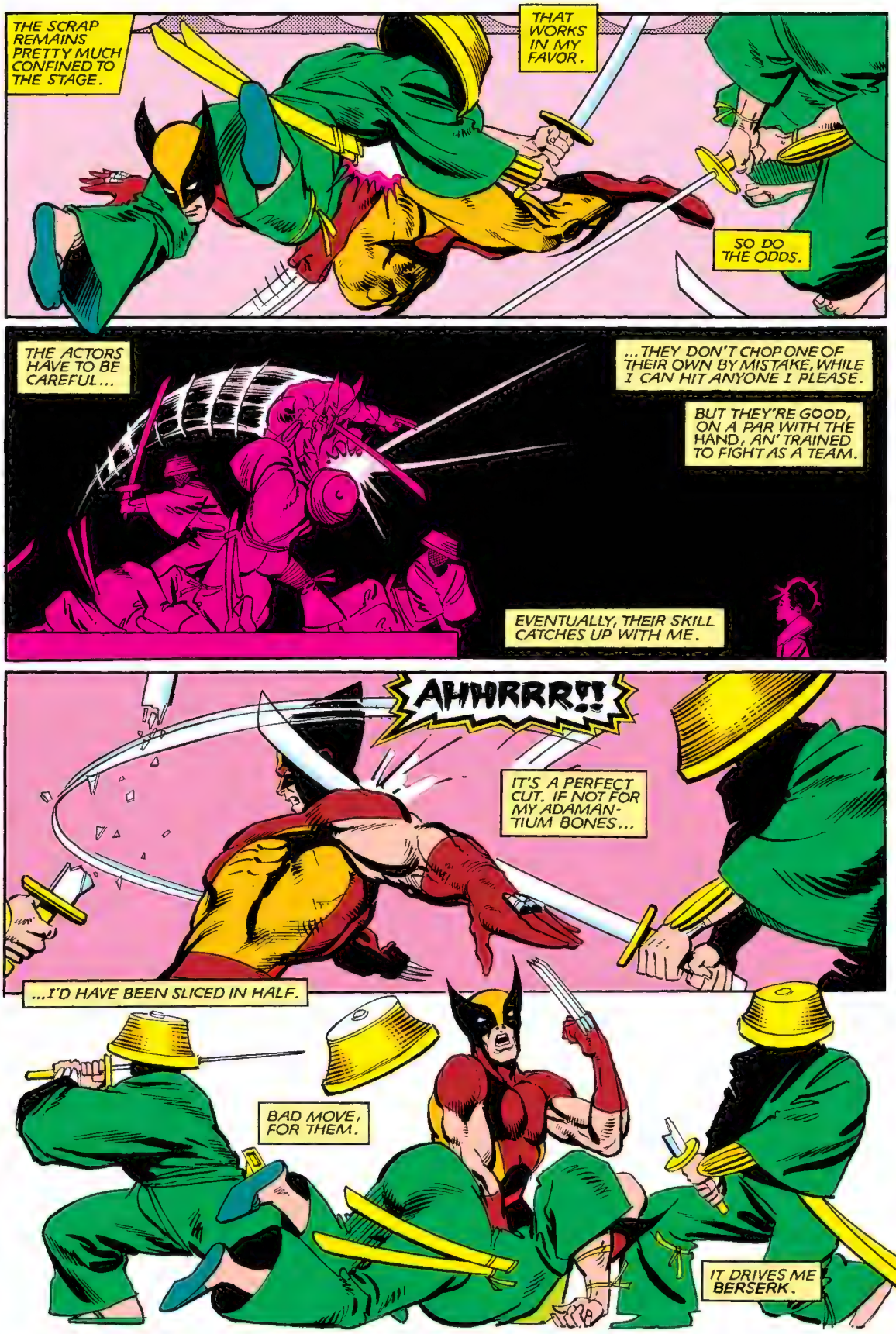
I FACE THE REST OF THE COMPANY. THEY'RE AS READY TO FIGHT AS THEIR LEADER.
HE TOOK A GAMBLE AND PAID THE PRICE. HIS COLLEAGUES WON'T BE AS FLAMBOYANT. I WANT TO SPARE MARIKO A GLANCE, TO SEE IF SHE'S OKAY, BUT I DON'T DARE.

〈 IF YOU WISH MARIKO-CHAN'S LIFE... 〉

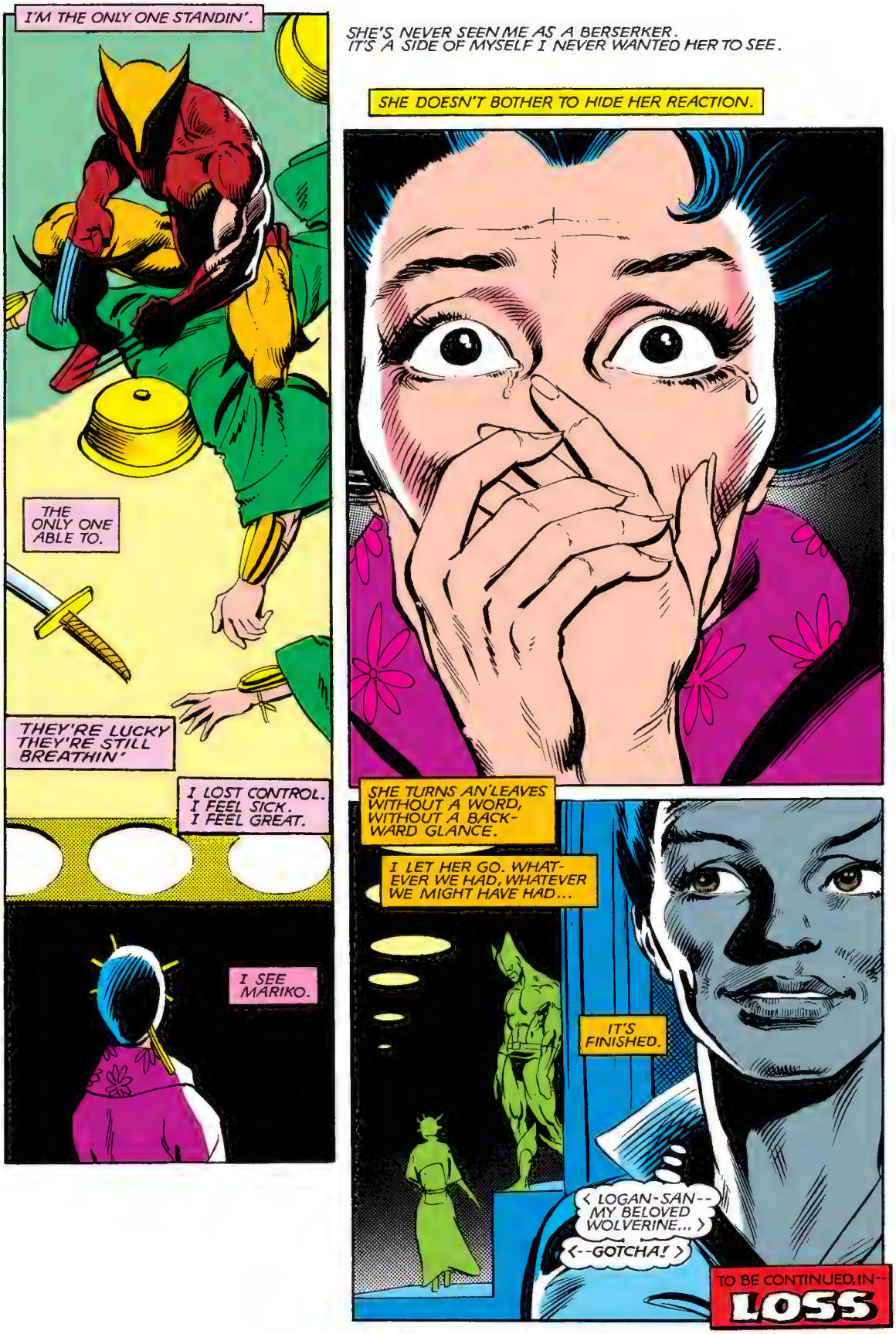

〈... YOU'LL HAVE TO GET PAST ME TO TAKE IT. 〉
〈 THEN, GAIJIN, WE SHALL! 〉
OKAY, BUB--

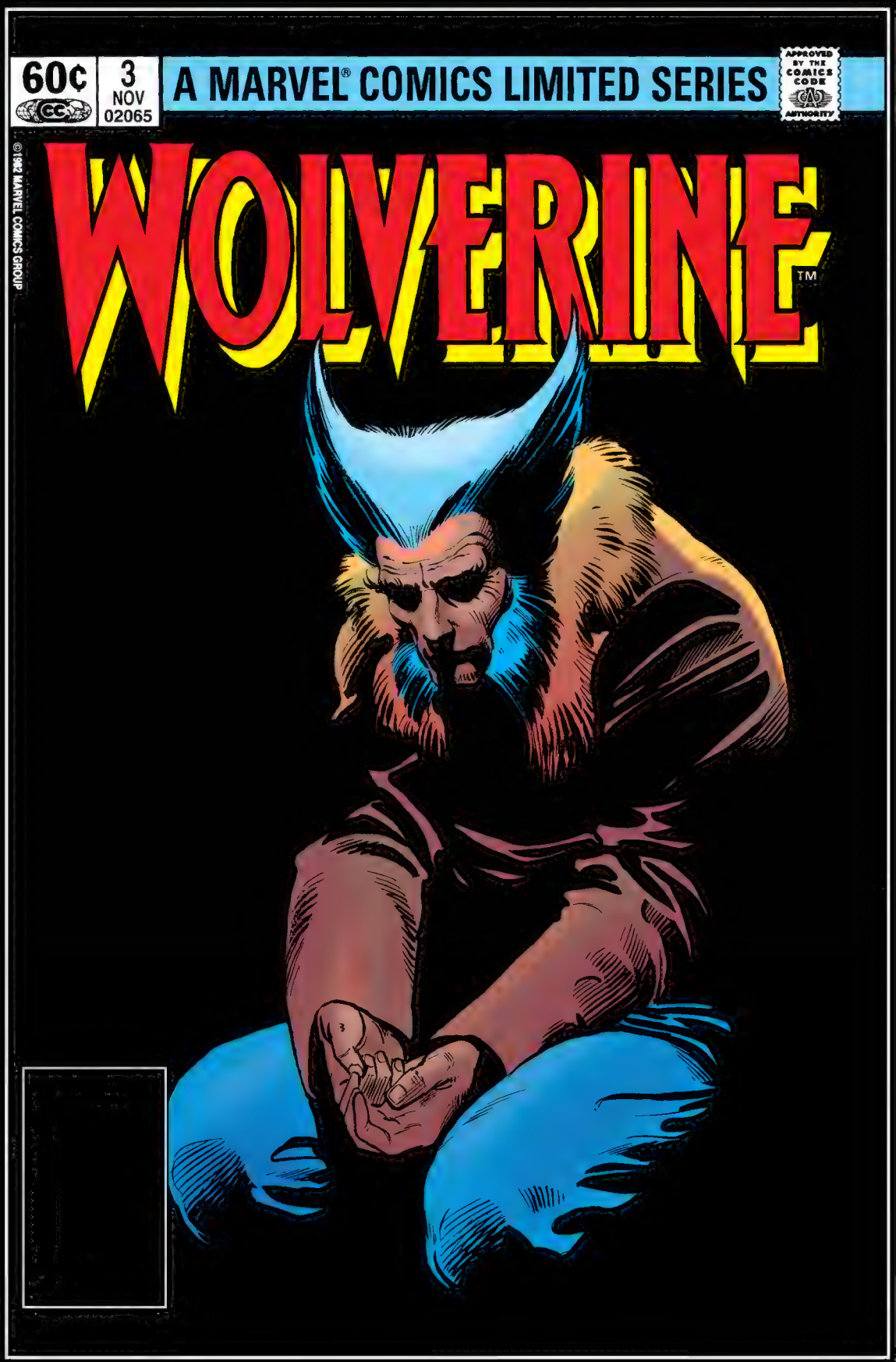

--IT'S YOUR FUNERAL!


PANDEMONIUM, I LOVE IT. AS THINGS GET INTERESTING...
... KATSUYORI AN' HIS WIFE BREAK FOR THE DOOR.
〈 I COMMEND YOU, NOBURU. YOU ANTICIPATED MY AMUSH. BUT YOUR FORESIGHT WILL AVAIL YOU NAUGHT. MY RETAINERS WILL DEAL WITH YOUR ASSASSIN... AND THEN WITH YOU! 〉
〈 HUSBAND! 〉
〈 OUR BODY-GUARDS! 〉
〈 DEAD. 〉
〈 THE AUTOMOBILE -- QUICKLY! 〉
〈 ONCE WE REACH OUR ESTATE, WE WILL BE SAFE! 〉
KLIK!
BOOM!
〈 GOTCHA! 〉


THE SCRAP REMAINS PRETTY MUCH CONFINED TO THE STAGE.
THAT WORKS IN MY FAVOR.
SO DO THE ODDS.
THE ACTORS HAVE TO BE CAREFUL...
...THEY DON'T CHOP ONE OF THEIR OWN BY MISTAKE, WHILE I CAN HIT ANYONE I PLEASE.
BUT THEY'RE GOOD, ON A PAR WITH THE HAND, AN' TRAINED TO FIGHT AS A TEAM.
EVENTUALLY, THEIR SKILL CATCHES UP WITH ME.
AHHRRR!!
IT'S A PERFECT CUT. IF NOT FOR MY ADAMAN-TIUM BONES...
...I'D HAVE BEEN SLICED IN HALF.
BAD MOVE, FOR THEM.
IT DRIVES ME BERSERK.

IN A MATTER OF MINUTES...
...THE BATTLE'S OVER.


I'M THE ONLY ONE STANDIN'.
THE ONLY ONE ABLE TO.
THEY'RE LUCKY THEY'RE STILL BREATHIN'
I LOST CONTROL. I FEEL SICK. I FEEL GREAT.
I SEE MARIKO.
SHE'S NEVER SEEN ME AS A BERSERKER. IT'S A SIDE OF MYSELF I NEVER WANTED HER TO SEE.
SHE DOESN'T BOTHER TO HIDE HER REACTION.
SHE TURNS AN'LEAVES WITHOUT A WORD, WITHOUT A BACK-WARD GLANCE.
I LET HER GO. WHAT-EVER WE HAD, WHATEVER WE MIGHT HAVE HAD...
IT'S FINISHED.
< LOGAN-SAN-- MY BELOVED WOLVERINE... >
<--GOTCHA! >
TO BE CONTINUED IN--
LOSS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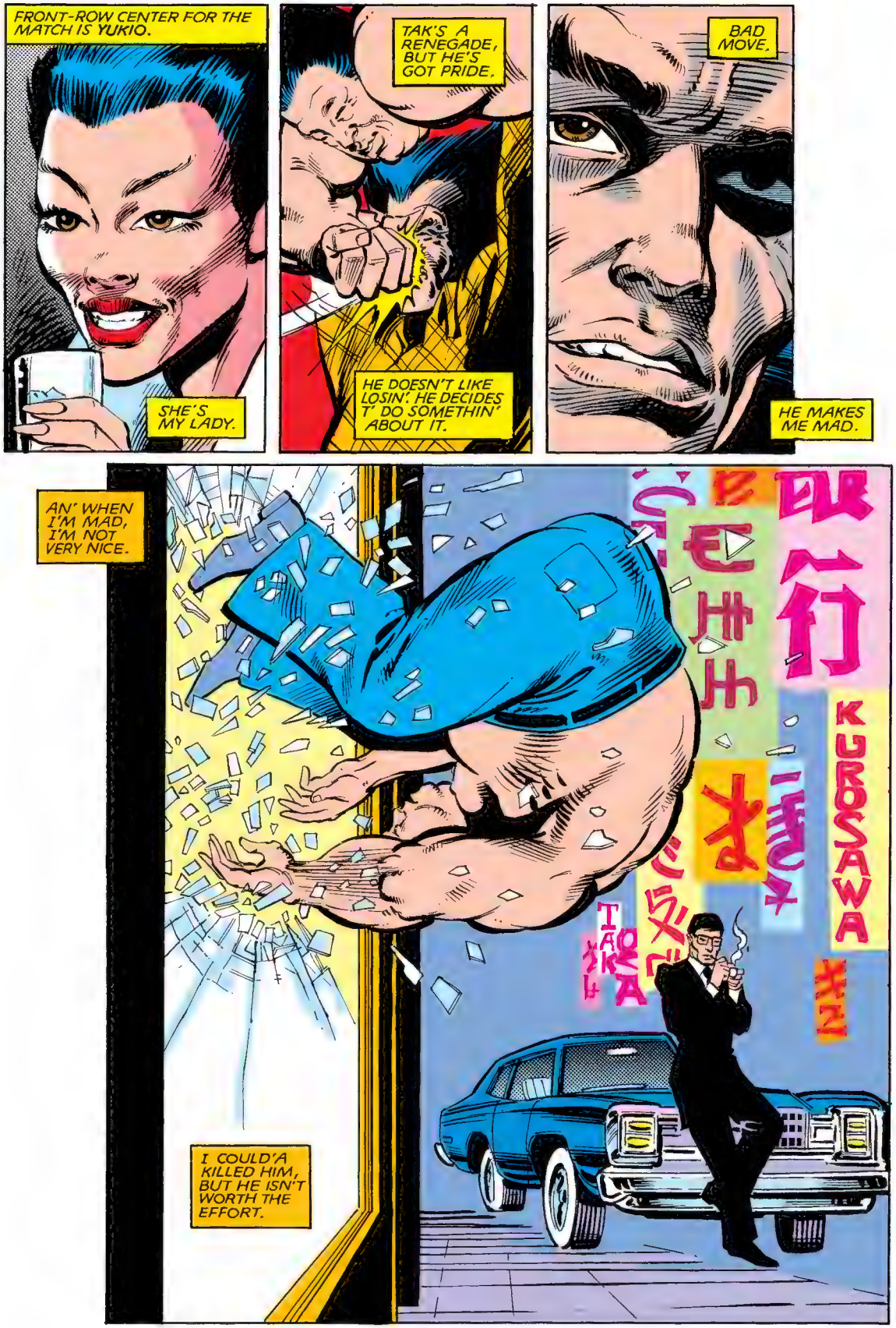
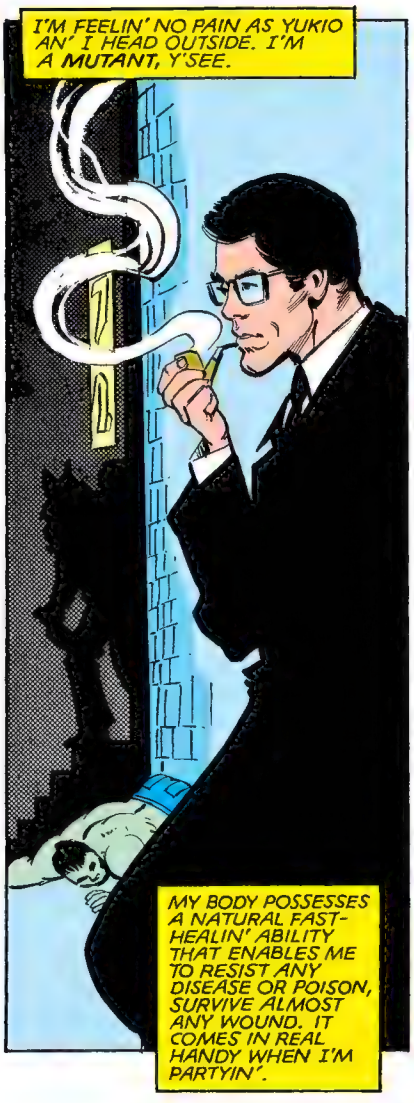
WOLVERINE™

I'M WOLVERINE.
I'M THE BEST THERE IS AT WHAT I DO.
I USED T' BE A SECRET AGENT.
I USED T' BE A HERO.
NOW, I'M DRUNK.
AN' LOVIN' EV'RY MINUTE OF IT!
THE CLOWN ON MY BACK'S NAMED TAKAHASHI. HE'S A SUMOTORI, A SUMO WRESTLER. HE COULD'A BEEN CHAMPION, BUT HE CHEATS.
BLACKLISTED FROM THE PROFESSIONAL RING, HE EARNS HIS LIVING IN THESE ILLEGAL BARROOM BASHOS. IN THIS ARENA, HE'S UNDEFEATED.

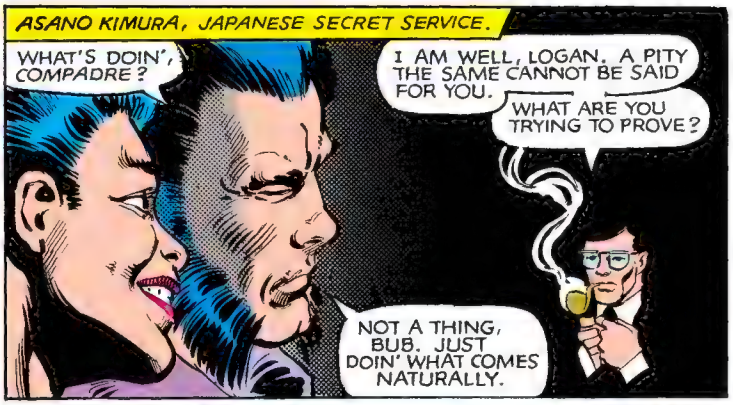
WHEN I CHALLENGED HIM, HE LAUGHED.
SUCKER AIN'T LAUGHIN' ANYMORE.

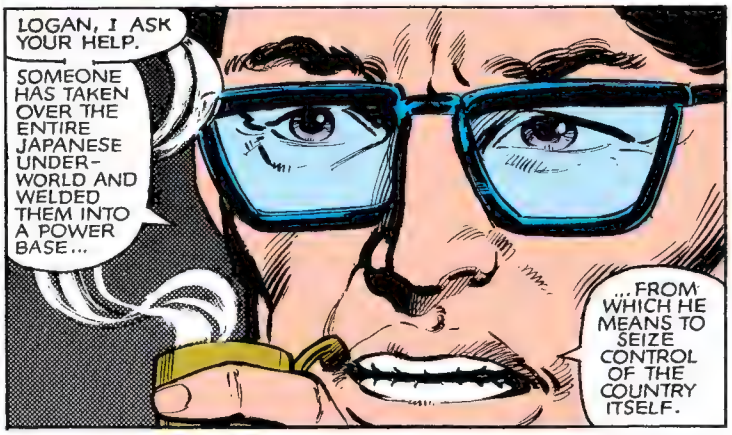

FRONT-ROW CENTER FOR THE MATCH IS YUKIO.
SHE'S MY LADY.
TAK'S A RENEGADE, BUT HE'S GOT PRIDE.
HE DOESN'T LIKE LOSIN'. HE DECIDES T' DO SOMETHIN' ABOUT IT.
BAD MOVE.
HE MAKES ME MAD.
AN' WHEN I'M MAD, I'M NOT VERY NICE.
I COULD'A KILLED HIM, BUT HE ISN'T WORTH THE EFFORT.
KUROSAWA
TAKA


I'M FEELIN' NO PAIN AS YUKIO AN' I HEAD OUTSIDE. I'M A MUTANT, Y'SEE.
MY BODY POSSESSES A NATURAL FAST-HEALIN' ABILITY THAT ENABLES ME TO RESIST ANY DISEASE OR POISON, SURVIVE ALMOST ANY WOUND. IT COMES IN REAL HANDY WHEN I'M PARTYIN'.

WE'VE BEEN PARTYIN' PRETTY MUCH NON-STOP SINCE WE MET, RAISIN' CAIN FROM ONE END O' TOKYO TO THE OTHER, LIVIN' LIKE THERE'S NO TOMORROW.

I HAVE OTHER TALENTS AS WELL. I'M STRONG, AN' FAST, AN' MY SENSES ARE KEENER'N MOST ANIMALS'. EVEN BLITZED AS I AM, I RECOGNIZE THE MAN WAITIN' FOR US.

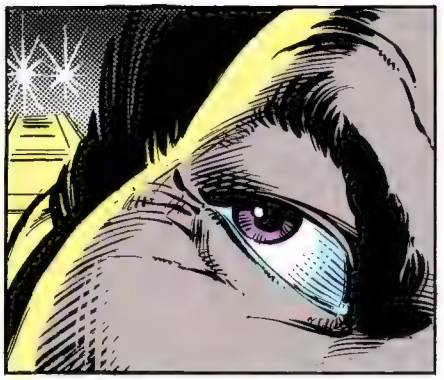

ASANO KIMURA, JAPANESE SECRET SERVICE.
WHAT'S DOIN', COMPADRE?
I AM WELL, LOGAN. A PITY THE SAME CANNOT BE SAID FOR YOU.
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO PROVE?
NOT A THING, BUB. JUST DOIN' WHAT COMES NATURALLY.


LOGAN, I ASK YOUR HELP.
SOMEONE HAS TAKEN OVER THE ENTIRE JAPANESE UNDER-WORLD AND WELDED THEM INTO A POWER BASE...
...FROM WHICH HE MEANS TO SEIZE CONTROL OF THE COUNTRY ITSELF.

WHAT'S THAT T' ME?
MY GOVERNMENT WANTS THIS PLOT SMASHED AND THE MAN RESPONSIBLE... NEUTRALIZED, BUT I CANNOT DO THE JOB ALONE.
I NEED YOU.
I NEED YOU, TOO, LOVER.
LOGAN, AS A FRIEND--!

CHRIS CLAREMONT
SCRIPTER
FRANK MILLER
PENCILER
JOSEF RUBINSTEIN
FINISHER
TOM ORZECHOWSKI
LETTERER
GLYNIS WEIN
COLORIST
LOUISE JONES
EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
WE GO OUR SEPARATE WAYS.
< WAIT, MY BROTHERS.* >
< THE TIME IS NOT YET RIPE. >
STAN LEE presents...
LOSS
*TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE --L.

WHAT ARE WE DOIN' OUT IN THE MIDDLE O' NOWHERE, DARLIN'? I THOUGHT WE WERE HEADIN' BACK T' MY PLACE.
< LATER, MY LOVE. THE NIGHT IS STILL YOUNG. >
< THERE IS STILL MUCH TO DO. >
IF YOU SAY SO--
WHOOOOO!
I'M REELIN'-- CATCH ME, DARLIN'!
< OOOFF! WHAT A WEIGHT! >
< I CANNOT HOLD YOU! >
WE FALL, LAUGHIN'.
SHE FEELS GOOD IN MY ARMS A PERFECT FIT.
< THIS IS MY SECRET-- MY FAVORITE PLACE, LOGAN. YOU'RE THE FIRST I'VE EVER BROUGHT HERE. >
I'M HONORED.
NOW WHAT DO I DO?
< YOU HAVE TO ASK? >
< WE WAIT FOR THE FINAL MOMENT, LOGAN. THEN WE GO. >
NO FOOLIN'. WHAT'RE WE WAITIN' FOR?
< YOU'LL SEE. >
THE BOTTLE FALLS, SHATTERS.



I'M HAZY-- CAUSE O' THE BOOZE-- AN' NEITHER SENSES NOR SKULL ARE OPERATIN' ANYWHERE NEAR PEAK EFFICIENCY.

THE PIECES ARE THERE-- A VIBRATION IN THE EARTH, ON THE TRACKS, A RUSH OF AIR, A SUBSONIC RUMBLE-- ONLY IT TAKES ME A WHILE TO SORT 'EM OUT.

WHEN I DO, I MOVE.

FAST!

THE SHINKANSEN!

ARE YOU FLAMIN' CRAZY, WOMAN-- PLAYIN' "CHICKEN" WITH A 200 MILE-PER HOUR "BULLET TRAIN?!!" D'YOU WANT TO DIE?!

< DOES IT MATTER? I WILL EVENTUALLY. SO WILL YOU. >

< BUT UNTIL THEN, LOGAN, I WANT TO LIVE, EVERY MOMENT, TO THE FULLEST! AND WHEN I DIE... >

<... I WISH TO DIE SPECTACULARLY! >

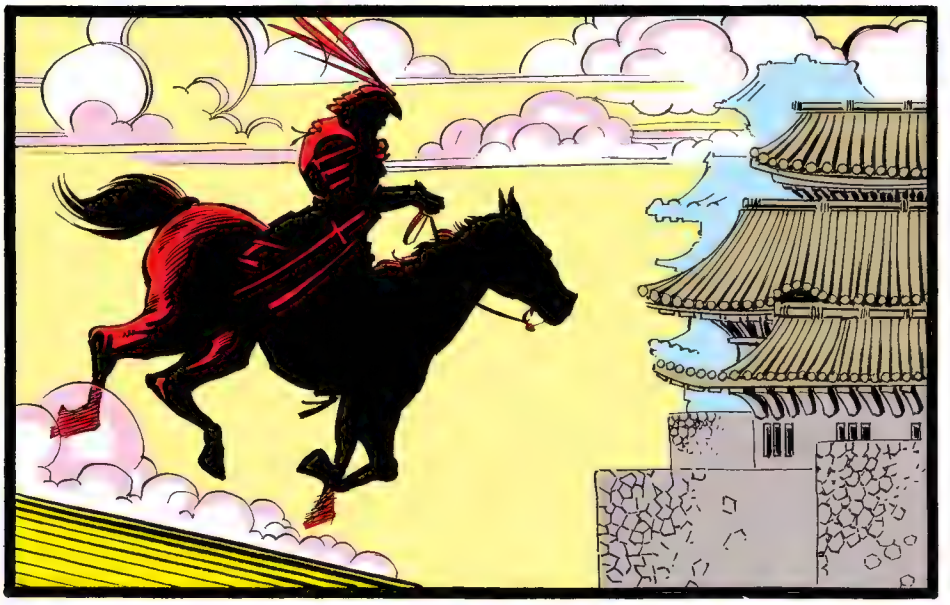
< WHETHER YOU ADMIT IT OR NOT, MY LOVE... >

<... YOU ARE THE SAME. >

=Snorre=

< SLEEP, LOGAN-CHAN. >

< DO NOT FEAR, I'LL PROTECT YOU. >



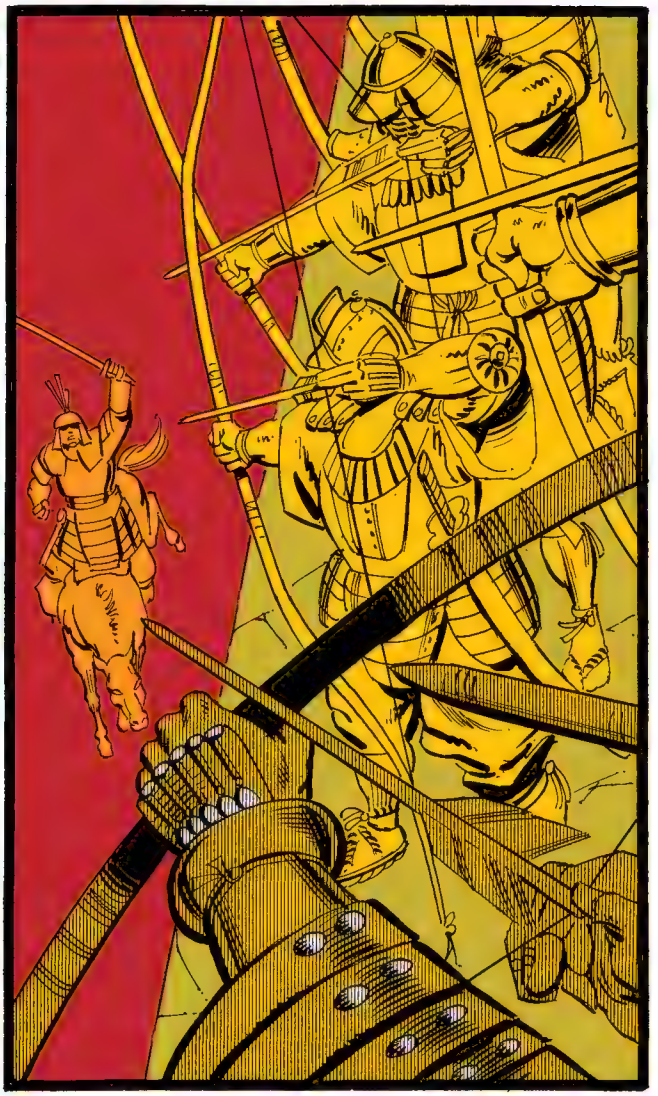
I SLEEP. I... DREAM.

A WARRIOR RIDES OUT OF THE WEST, TO WIN THE HAND OF THE WOMAN HE LOVES. SHE IS MARIKO, THE DAUGHTER OF A GREAT HOUSE, HEIR TO AN ANCIENT, NOBLE LINE. HE IS A RUDE, ROUGH-HEWN MAN OF COMMON STOCK, BUT HIS SKILL AND COURAGE ARE LEGEND.

HE THINKS THAT IS ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM WORTHY OF HER. BUT HE FINDS THE GATES OF HER HOME BARRED, THE WALLS LINED WITH ARCHERS. "TURN AWAY, GAIJIN," HE IS TOLD. "YOU ARE NOT WELCOME HERE."

THE ODDS ARE IMPOSSIBLE, THE CAUSE HOPELESS, YET NOT FOR A MOMENT DOES THE WARRIOR HESITATE.

HE ATTACKS.



THE BATTLE IS TERRIBLE.

FINALLY, WOUNDED UNTO DEATH, THE WARRIOR DRAGS HIMSELF INTO THE CASTLE'S COURTYARD, AND THERE, AT LAST, BEHOLDS THE FACE OF HIS BELOVED. "WHY?" HE ASKS.

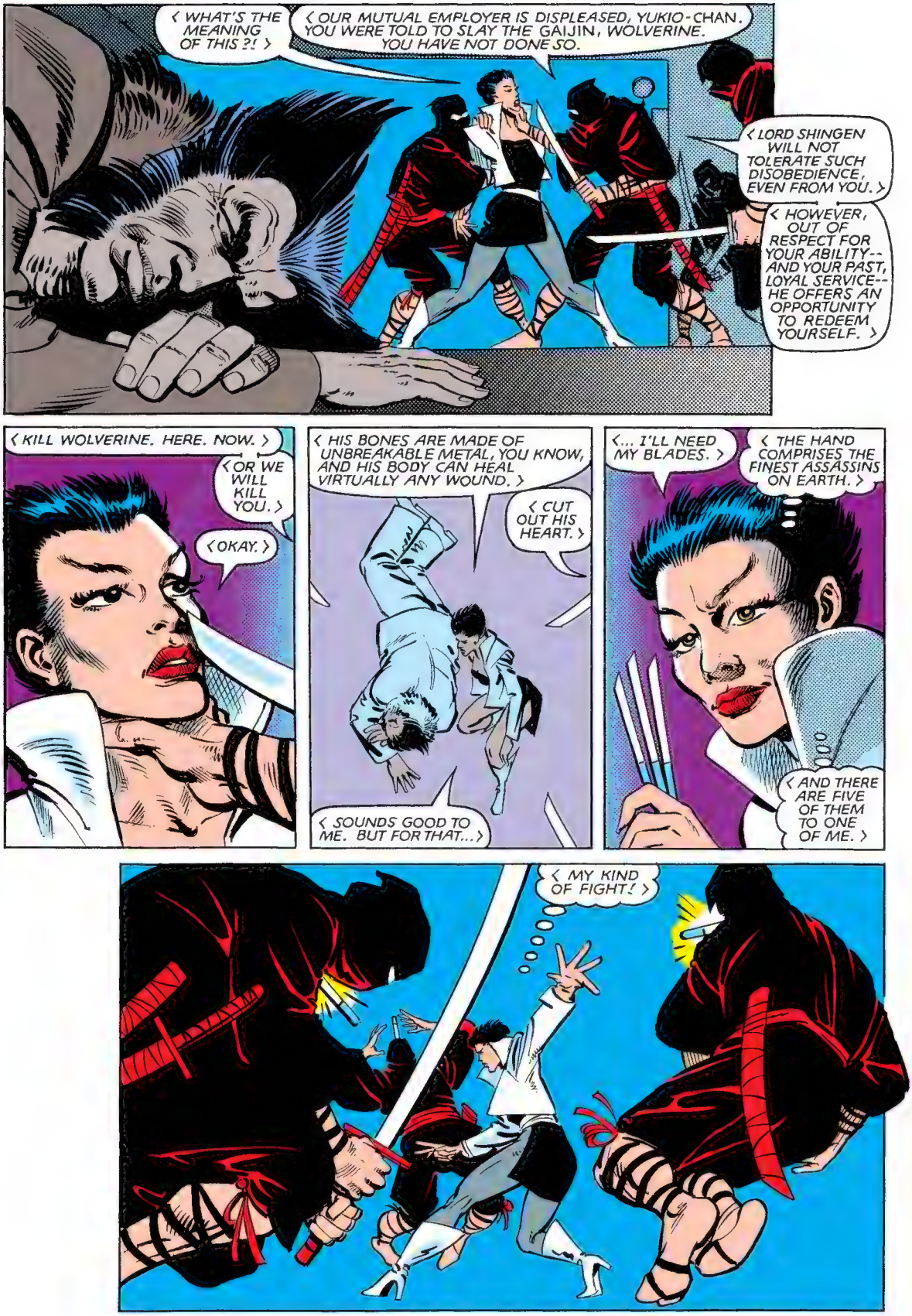
"MY LOVE IS FOR A MAN," SHE REPLIES, "NOT A BEAST CLAD IN HUMAN FORM WHO KNOWS NOTHING OF HONOR, OR DUTY, OR ANY OF THE BELIEFS I HOLD MOST DEAR.

"WORTHY OF ME? YOU ARE NOT EVEN WORTHY OF LIFE!"

HER ARROW PIERCES HIS SOUL, CASTING HIM SCREAMING BACK INTO THE ABYSS OUT OF WHICH HE HAD STRUGGLED SO LONG AGO.

AND, ALTHOUGH HE LIVES, THE PROUD WARRIOR IS IN TRUTH NO MORE.

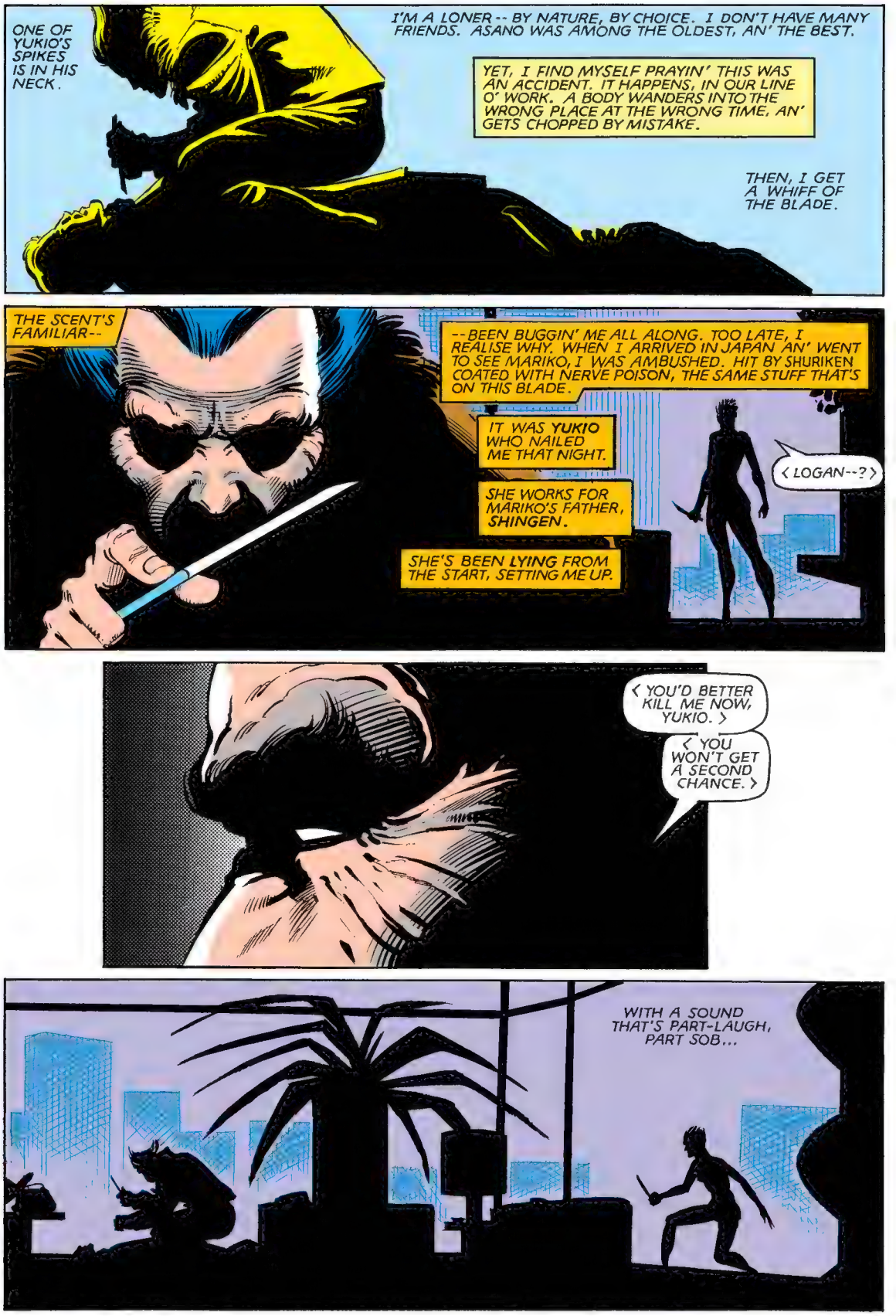
I DREAM. I... WEEP.

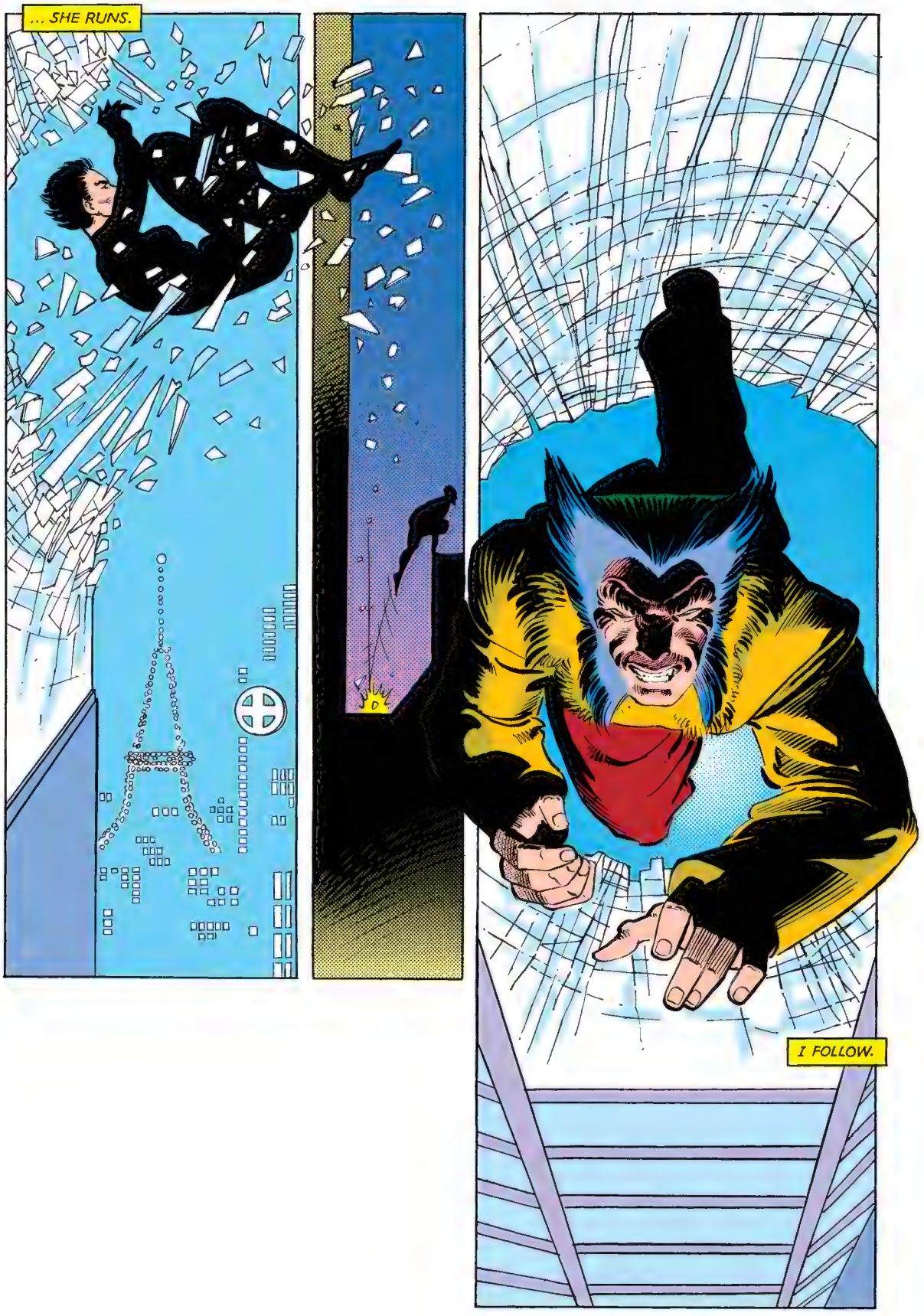

〈 WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS ?! 〉
〈 OUR MUTUAL EMPLOYER IS DISPLEASED, YUKIO-CHAN. YOU WERE TOLD TO SLAY THE GAIJIN, WOLVERINE. YOU HAVE NOT DONE SO.
〈 LORD SHINGEN WILL NOT TOLERATE SUCH DISOBEDIENCE, EVEN FROM YOU. 〉
〈 HOWEVER, OUT OF RESPECT FOR YOUR ABILITY-- AND YOUR PAST, LOYAL SERVICE-- HE OFFERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO REDEEM YOURSELF. 〉
〈 KILL WOLVERINE. HERE. NOW. 〉
〈 OR WE WILL KILL YOU. 〉
〈 OKAY. 〉
〈 HIS BONES ARE MADE OF UNBREAKABLE METAL, YOU KNOW, AND HIS BODY CAN HEAL VIRTUALLY ANY WOUND. 〉
〈 CUT OUT HIS HEART. 〉
〈 SOUNDS GOOD TO ME. BUT FOR THAT... 〉
〈... I'LL NEED MY BLADES. 〉
〈 THE HAND COMPRISES THE FINEST ASSASSINS ON EARTH. 〉
〈 AND THERE ARE FIVE OF THEM TO ONE OF ME. 〉
〈 MY KIND OF FIGHT! 〉

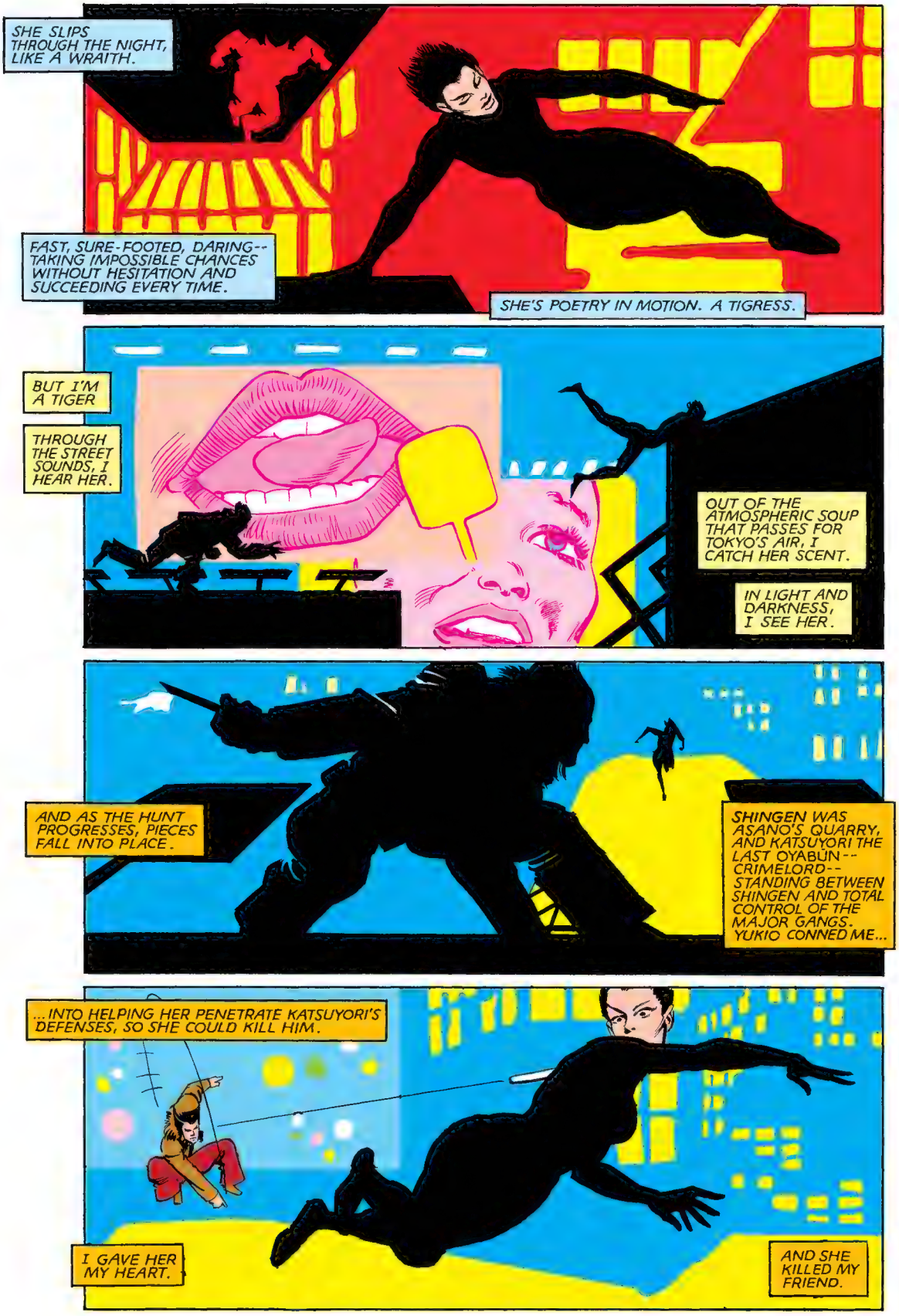
< WOMAN, YOU HAVE SIGNED YOUR DEATH WARRANT! NEITHER SHINGEN NOR THE HAND WILL REST UNTIL-->
<--URRGH!>
< GOTCHA! >
< WAKE UP, LOVER. WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE! >
< LOGAN, I'M SERIOUS! WE'RE IN TROUBLE! >
< WAKE UP ! >
M- MARIKO...

< HE STILL LOVES HER. HE ALWAYS WILL, THE FOOL! I CAN MAKE HIM HAPPY, I'M RIGHT FOR HIM--WHY CAN'T HE SEE THAT?! >
< MARIKO--MAY SHE ROT IN HELL--IS THE ONLY WOMAN FOR HIM, AND HE'S THE ONLY MAN FOR ME. >
< I CURSE THE DAY I MET HIM. HE'S DESTROYED ME! >
< WELL, THANKS TO HIM, MY DEATH SHOULD BE EVERYTHING I'VE YEARNED FOR. SHINGEN ALWAYS ACCEPTED AND INDULGED MY WILD NATURE, BUT THIS TIME I'VE GONE TOO FAR. HE'LL NEVER FORGIVE ME. >
< THAT POSES A PROBLEM--WHOSE SOLUTION IS AS OBVIOUS AS IT IS SIMPLE. >
< THE DOOR--LOGAN? >
< NO--TOO TENTATIVE. >
KRIK
< THE HAND?!? >

I WAKE SORE AN' ACHIN'--AN' NO WONDER. YUKIO'S KICK FLAMIN' NEAR SNAPPED MY SPINE--TO FIND MYSELF SURROUNDED BY THE REMAINS O' FIVE O' THE HAND.
EVIDENTLY, THEY DISINTEGRATE WHEN THEY'RE BEATEN. VERY TIDY.
NO SIGN OF YUKIO. I FIGURE SHE'S FURIOUS. MY FAULT, FOR BABBLIN' MARIKO'S NAME.
THAT, WE'LL DEAL WITH AS BEST WE CAN. WHAT WORRIES ME...
...IS THE HAND.
THEIR INTEREST IN YUKIO SHOULD HAVE ENDED WITH THE DEATH OF THEIR EMPLOYER, THE CRIMELORD KATSUYORI. * WHY ARE THEY STILL AFTER HER?
*SEE LAST ISH--L.
I START TO CALL HER NAME.
THEN, ON THE THRESHOLD, I FREEZE.
THERE'S NO LIGHT. I DON'T NEED IT. SCENT TELLS ME THERE'S A CORPSE IN THE ROOM, ALSO WHO IT IS.
ASANO.


ONE OF YUKIO'S SPIKES IS IN HIS NECK.
I'M A LONER -- BY NATURE, BY CHOICE. I DON'T HAVE MANY FRIENDS. ASANO WAS AMONG THE OLDEST, AN' THE BEST.
YET, I FIND MYSELF PRAYIN' THIS WAS AN ACCIDENT. IT HAPPENS, IN OUR LINE O' WORK. A BODY WANDERS INTO THE WRONG PLACE AT THE WRONG TIME, AN' GETS CHOPPED BY MISTAKE.
THEN, I GET A WHIFF OF THE BLADE.
THE SCENT'S FAMILIAR--
--BEEN BUGGIN' ME ALL ALONG. TOO LATE, I REALISE WHY. WHEN I ARRIVED IN JAPAN AN' WENT TO SEE MARIKO, I WAS AMBUSHED. HIT BY SHURIKEN COATED WITH NERVE POISON, THE SAME STUFF THAT'S ON THIS BLADE.
IT WAS YUKIO WHO NAILED ME THAT NIGHT.
SHE WORKS FOR MARIKO'S FATHER, SHINGEN.
SHE'S BEEN LYING FROM THE START, SETTING ME UP.
〈 LOGAN--? 〉
〈 YOU'D BETTER KILL ME NOW, YUKIO. 〉
〈 YOU WON'T GET A SECOND CHANCE. 〉
WITH A SOUND THAT'S PART-LAUGH, PART SOB...

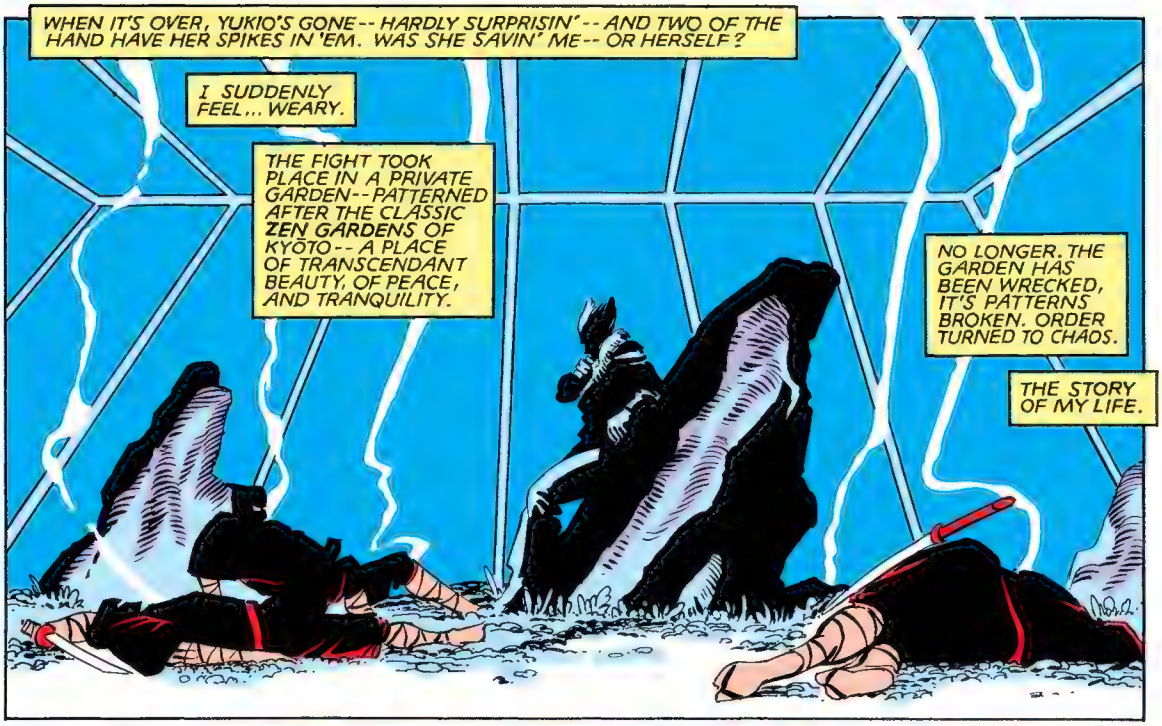

... SHE RUNS.
I FOLLOW.

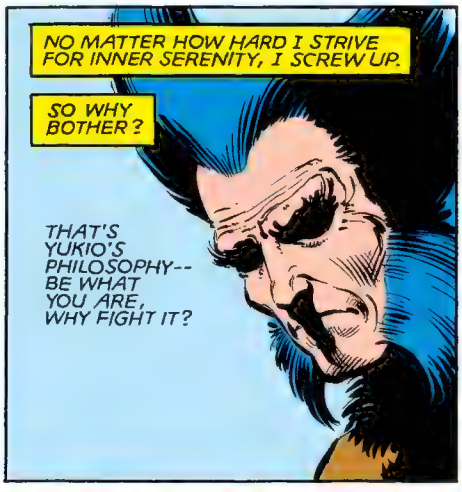

SHE SLIPS THROUGH THE NIGHT, LIKE A WRAITH.
FAST, SURE-FOOTED, DARING-- TAKING IMPOSSIBLE CHANCES WITHOUT HESITATION AND SUCCEEDING EVERY TIME.
SHE'S POETRY IN MOTION. A TIGRESS.
BUT I'M A TIGER
THROUGH THE STREET SOUNDS, I HEAR HER.
OUT OF THE ATMOSPHERIC SOUP THAT PASSES FOR TOKYO'S AIR, I CATCH HER SCENT.
IN LIGHT AND DARKNESS, I SEE HER.
AND AS THE HUNT PROGRESSES, PIECES FALL INTO PLACE.
SHINGEN WAS ASANO'S QUARRY, AND KATSUYORI THE LAST OYABUN-- CRIMELORD-- STANDING BETWEEN SHINGEN AND TOTAL CONTROL OF THE MAJOR GANGS. YUKIO CONNED ME...
...INTO HELPING HER PENETRATE KATSUYORI'S DEFENSES, SO SHE COULD KILL HIM.
I GAVE HER MY HEART.
AND SHE KILLED MY FRIEND.

CRASH!!
< RACE IS OVER, DARLIN'. >
< AM I TO DIE THEN, LOGAN-CHAN? >
< AFTER WHAT YOU'VE DONE... >
< ... YOU HAVE TO ASK? >
SNIKT!

〈 YOU CANNOT. 〉
〈 WE ARE TWO OF A KIND, SOUL-MATES-- BORN REBELS, LOGAN, WHO MAKE OUR OWN RULES IN A SOCIETY WHEREIN WE HAVE NO PLACE. AND WHICH HAS NO TRUE PLACE FOR US. 〉
〈 I LOVE YOU, LOGAN-CHAN-- AS YOU LOVE ME! KILL ME, AND KILL YOURSELF. 〉
SHE'S RIGHT.
〈 PERHAPS, DARLIN', THAT'S PRECISELY WHAT WE BOTH DESERVE. 〉
AHHRRR!
〈 SEIZE HIM, MY BROTHERS! HOLD HIM FAST! 〉
MY INITIAL REACTION IS THAT YUKIO'S LED ME INTO A TRAP. THEN, I CATCH A GLIMPSE OF HER FACE.
THE HAND!
SHE'S SCARED-- BUT MORE, I THINK, FOR ME THAN FOR HERSELF.

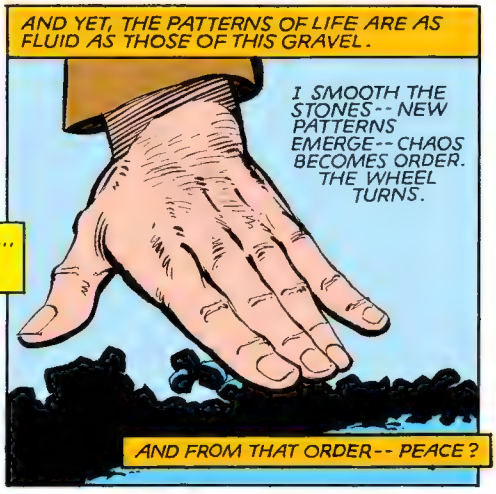
SHE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER.

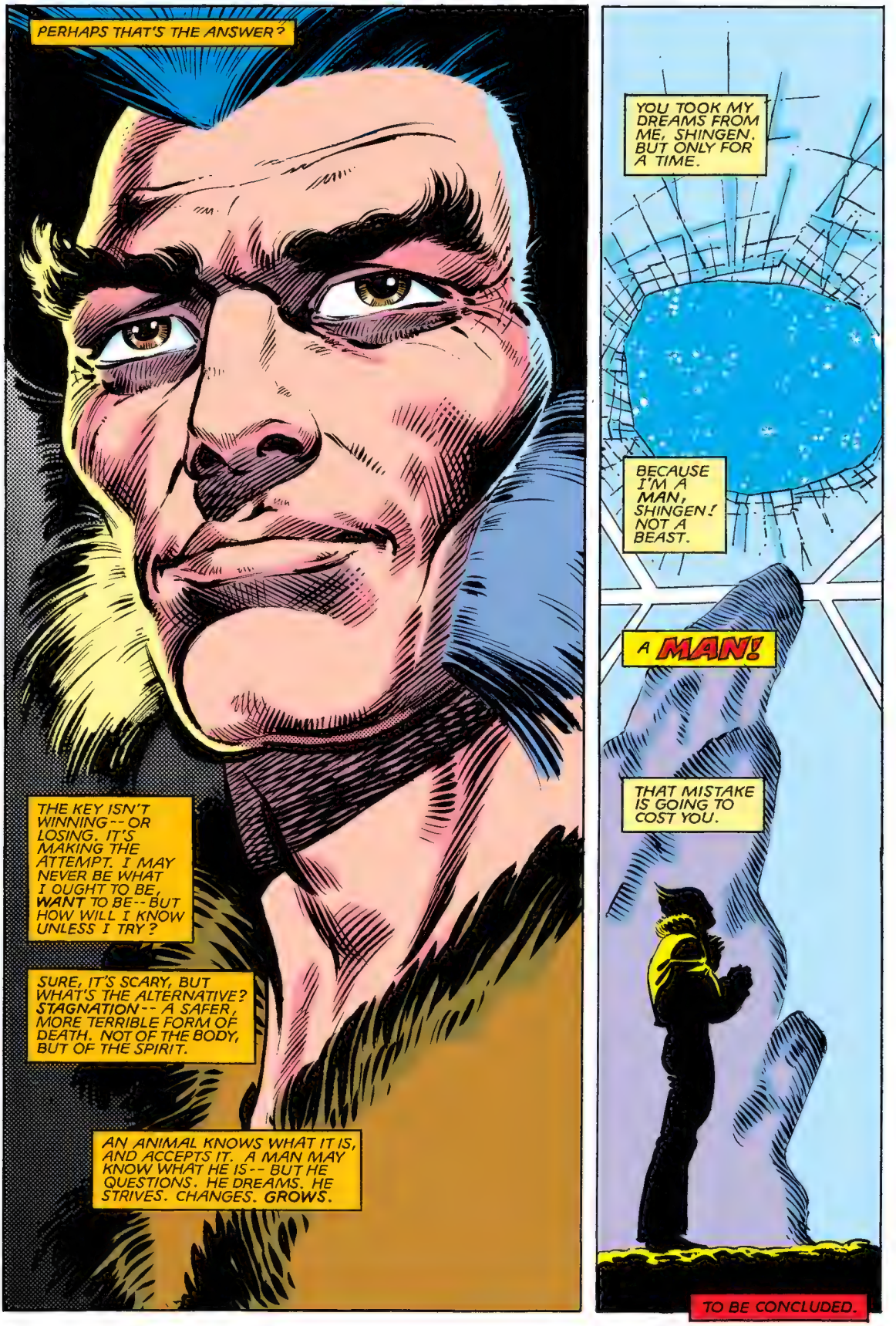

WHEN IT'S OVER, YUKIO'S GONE-- HARDLY SURPRISIN'-- AND TWO OF THE HAND HAVE HER SPIKES IN 'EM. WAS SHE SAVIN' ME-- OR HERSELF?
I SUDDENLY FEEL... WEARY.
THE FIGHT TOOK PLACE IN A PRIVATE GARDEN-- PATTERNED AFTER THE CLASSIC ZEN GARDENS OF KYOTO-- A PLACE OF TRANSCENDANT BEAUTY, OF PEACE, AND TRANQUILITY.
NO LONGER. THE GARDEN HAS BEEN WRECKED, IT'S PATTERNS BROKEN. ORDER TURNED TO CHAOS.
THE STORY OF MY LIFE.


NO MATTER HOW HARD I STRIVE FOR INNER SERENITY, I SCREW UP.
SO WHY BOTHER?
THAT'S YUKIO'S PHILOSOPHY-- BE WHAT YOU ARE, WHY FIGHT IT?

BY NATURE, WE'RE BOTH SCRAPPERS. WE LIKE IT. AN' WHEN THE NEED ARISES, WE CAN KILL. YUKIO WANTS ME THE WAY I AM.

MARIKO MAKES ME WANT TO CHANGE, TO GROW-- TO TEMPER THE BERSERKER IN ME.
I LOVE 'EM BOTH. I FAILED 'EM BOTH. WORSE, I FAILED MYSELF.
BECAUSE... I LOST MYSELF.


AND YET, THE PATTERNS OF LIFE ARE AS FLUID AS THOSE OF THIS GRAVEL.
I SMOOTH THE STONES-- NEW PATTERNS EMERGE-- CHAOS BECOMES ORDER. THE WHEEL TURNS.
AND FROM THAT ORDER-- PEACE?


PERHAPS THAT'S THE ANSWER?
THE KEY ISN'T WINNING -- OR LOSING. IT'S MAKING THE ATTEMPT. I MAY NEVER BE WHAT I OUGHT TO BE, WANT TO BE -- BUT HOW WILL I KNOW UNLESS I TRY?
SURE, IT'S SCARY, BUT WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE? STAGNATION -- A SAFER, MORE TERRIBLE FORM OF DEATH. NOT OF THE BODY, BUT OF THE SPIRIT.
AN ANIMAL KNOWS WHAT IT IS, AND ACCEPTS IT. A MAN MAY KNOW WHAT HE IS -- BUT HE QUESTIONS. HE DREAMS. HE STRIVES. CHANGES. GROWS.
YOU TOOK MY DREAMS FROM ME, SHINGEN, BUT ONLY FOR A TIME.
BECAUSE I'M A MAN, SHINGEN! NOT A BEAST.
A MAN!
THAT MISTAKE IS GOING TO COST YOU.
TO BE CONCLUDED.

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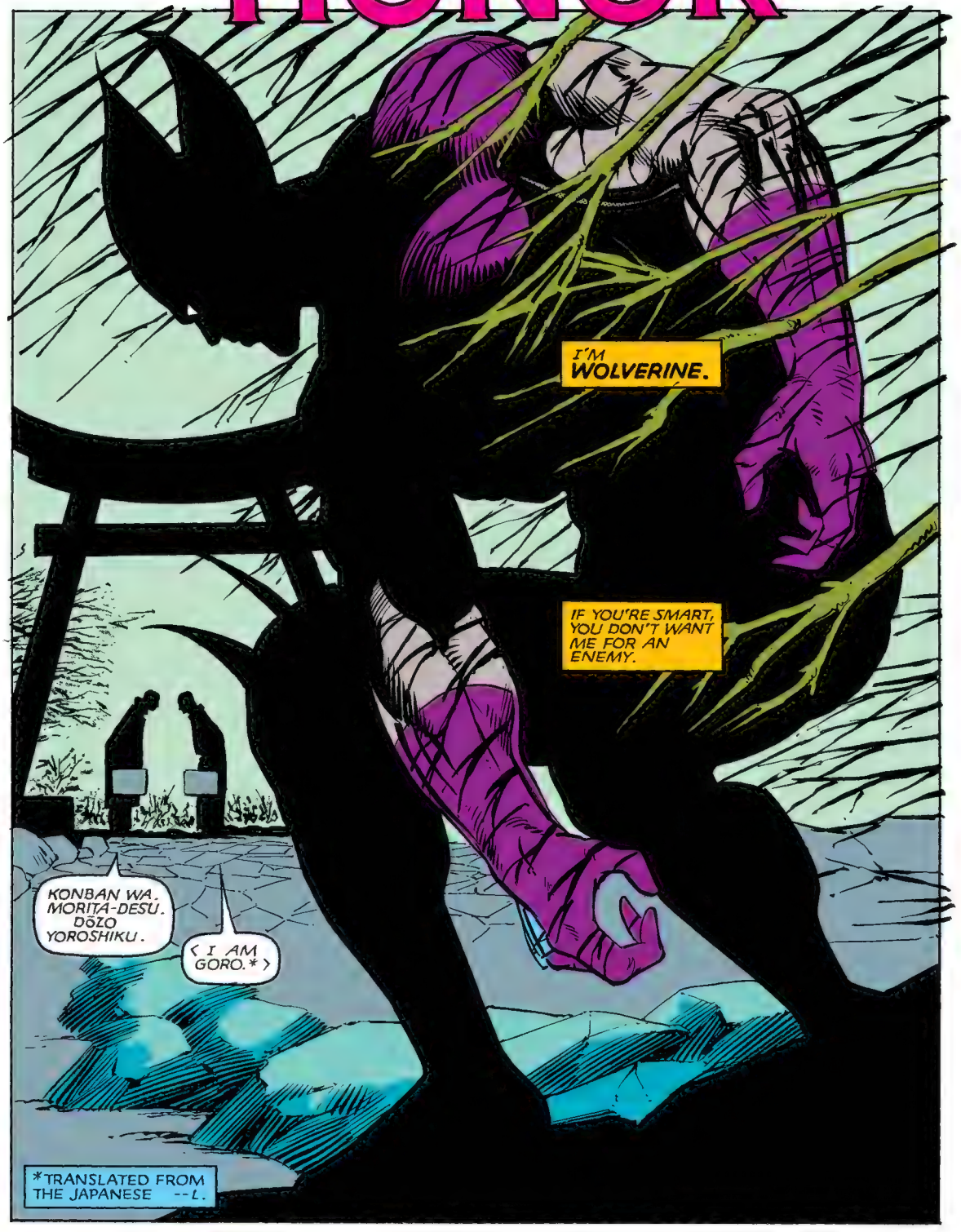
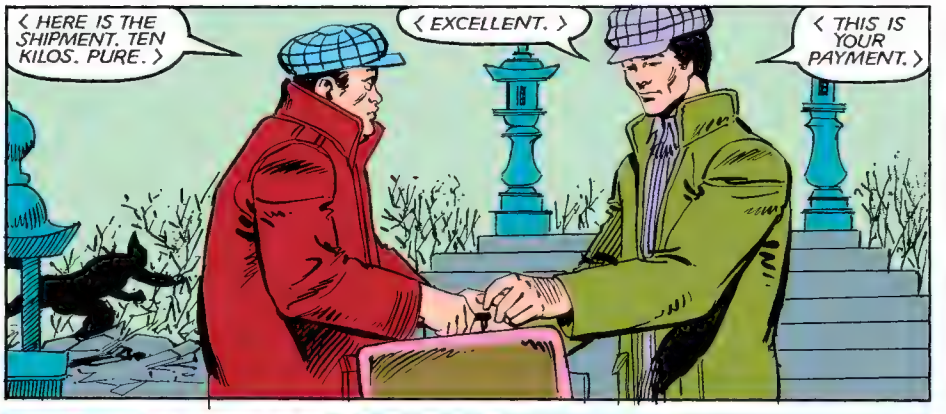
WOLVERINE™

Stan Lee
PRESENTS

HONOR

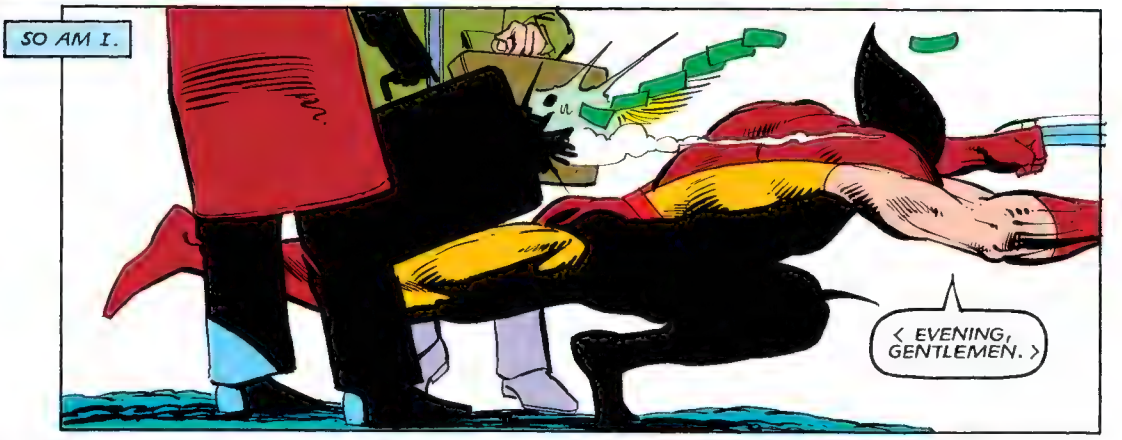

I'M WOLVERINE.
IF YOU'RE SMART, YOU DON'T WANT ME FOR AN ENEMY.
KONBAN WA. MORITA-DESU. DŌZO YOROSHIKU.
< I AM GORO.* >
*TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE --L.

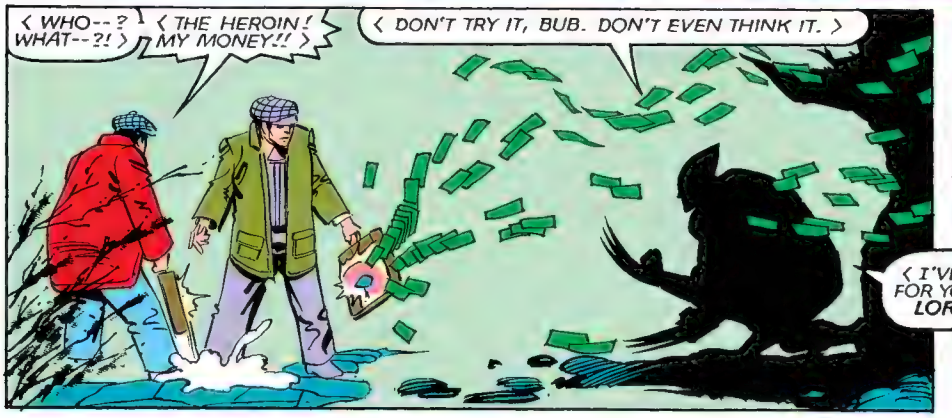


THEY KEEP THEIR VOICES LOW, BUT I HEAR 'EM FINE.

I'M A MUTANT, WITH ENHANCED PHYSICAL SENSES AND ABILITIES. BUT MY MAIN POWER IS MY BODY'S KNACK OF HEALIN' VIRTUALLY ANY INJURY. IN ADDITION, MY SKELETON IS LACED WITH ADAMANTIUM, WHICH MAKES MY BONES PRETTY NEAR UNBREAKABLE.

I ALSO HAVE CLAWS...
SNIKT!
... RAZOR-KEEN, FORGED OF PURE ADAMANTIUM, RETRACTABLE THROUGH THE BACKS O' MY HANDS INTO BIONIC HOUSINGS INSIDE MY FOREARMS. THEY'RE NASTY.



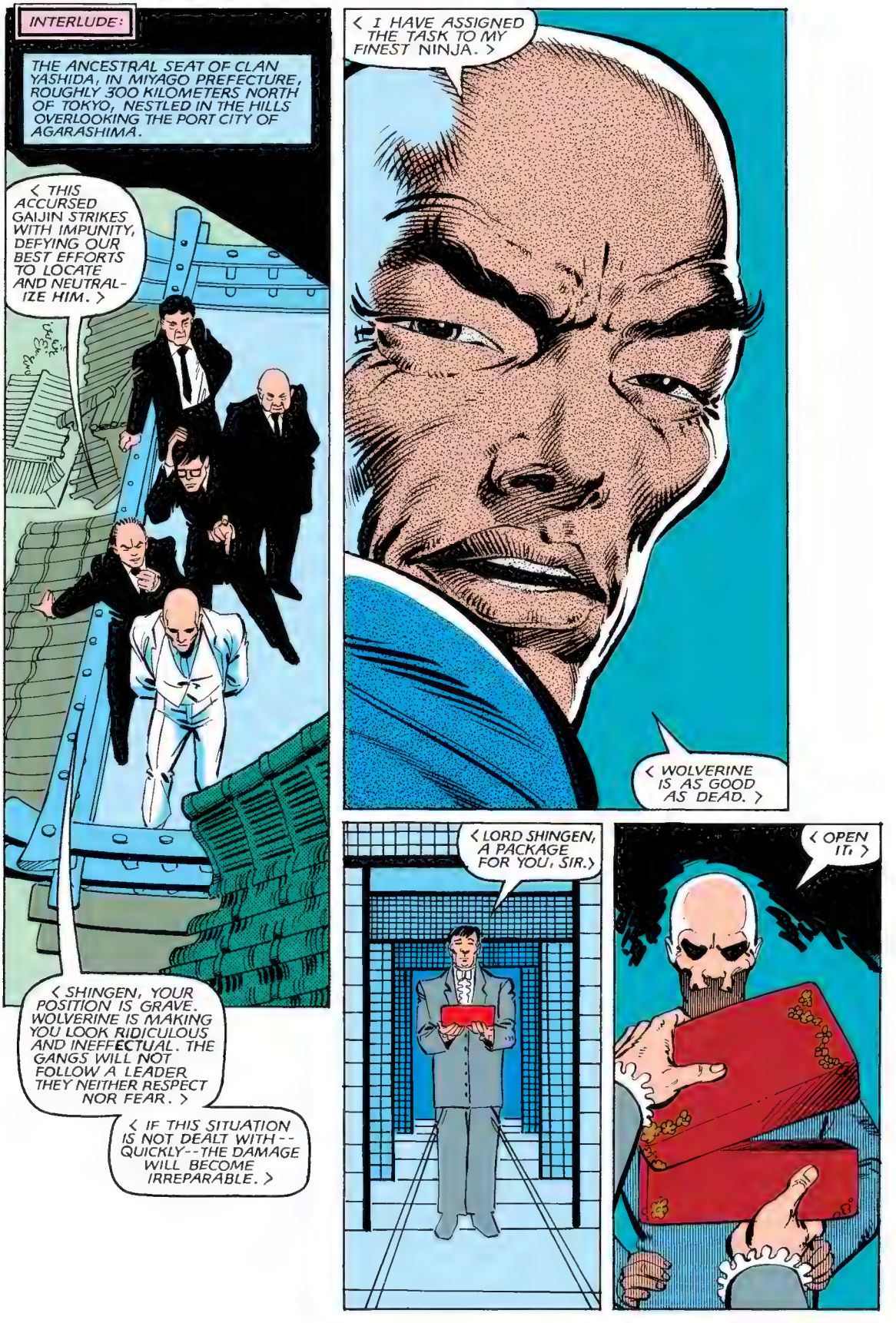


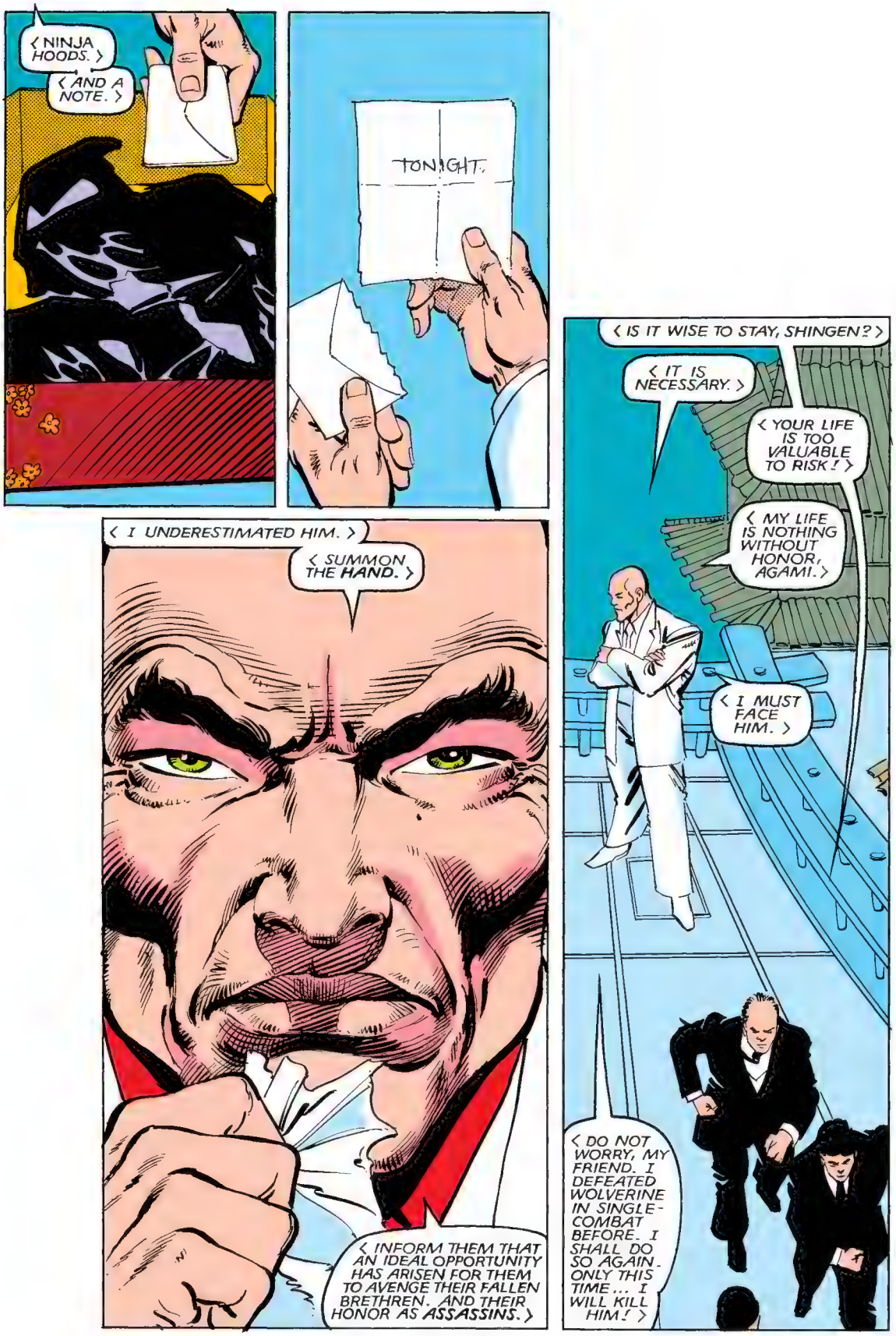
SMART BOY-- HE TAKES THE HINT AND LEAVES HIS GUN IN ITS HOLSTER.

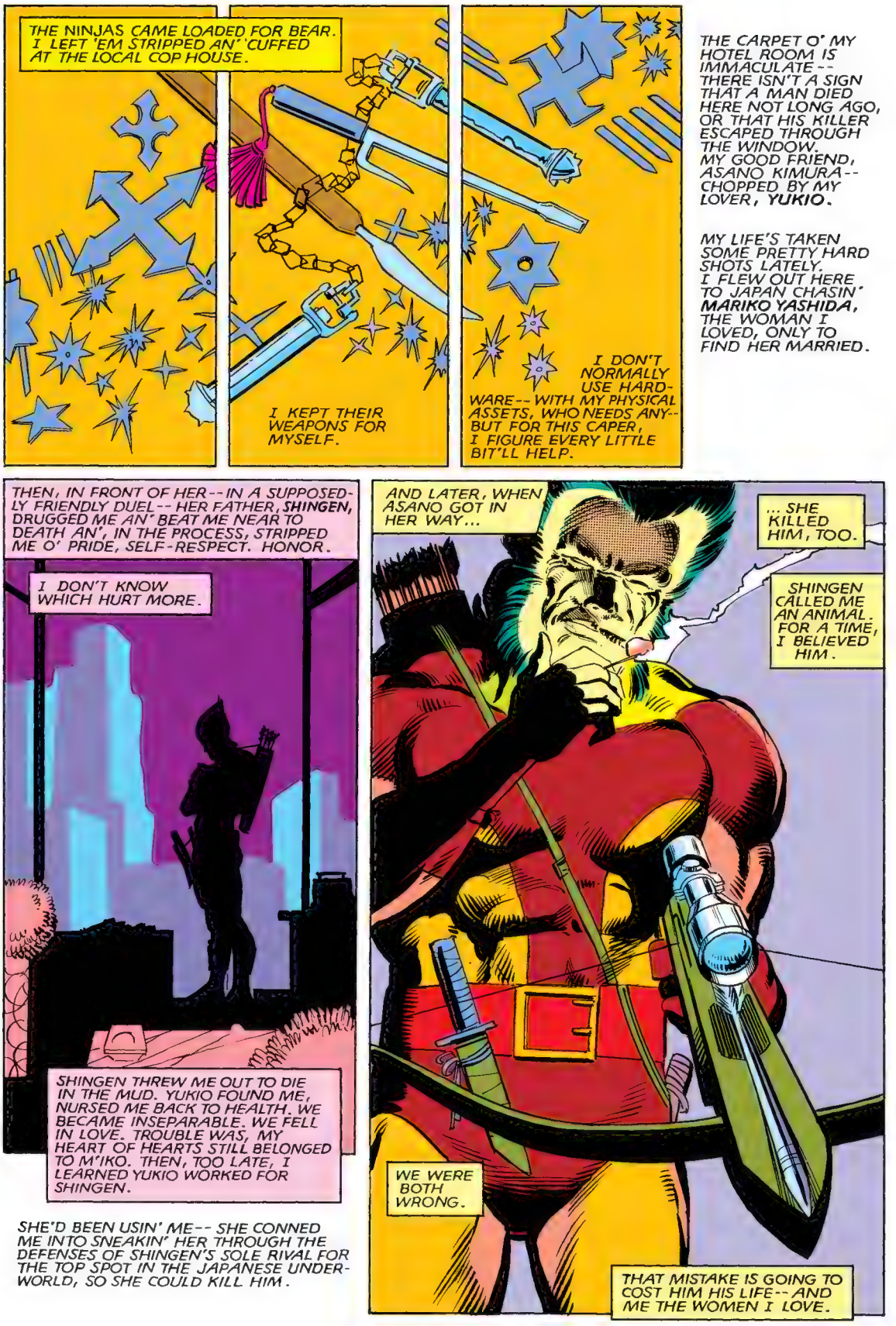
〈 I'VE A MESSAGE FOR YOUR BOSS. TELL **LORD SHINGEN**--〉

〈-- THAT **WOLVERINE** IS COMING FOR HIM. 〉

SHINGEN SPENT YEARS BUILDIN' HIS ORGANIZATION.
I SPEND HOURS RIPPIN' IT APART.
FROM THE TOP O' HIS HEAP TO THE BOTTOM, THROUGHOUT JAPAN, I TOUCH EVERY BASE HE HAS, AN' LEAVE THE SAME MESSAGE. SOME GUYS TRY TO FIGHT, SOME TO RUN.
NOBODY GETS VERY FAR.


INTERLUDE:
THE ANCESTRAL SEAT OF CLAN YASHIDA, IN MIYAGO PREFECTURE, ROUGHLY 300 KILOMETERS NORTH OF TOKYO, NESTLED IN THE HILLS OVERLOOKING THE PORT CITY OF AGARASHIMA.
< THIS ACCURSED GAIJIN STRIKES WITH IMPUNITY, DEFYING OUR BEST EFFORTS TO LOCATE AND NEUTRALIZE HIM. >
< SHINGEN, YOUR POSITION IS GRAVE. WOLVERINE IS MAKING YOU LOOK RIDICULOUS AND INEFFECTUAL. THE GANGS WILL NOT FOLLOW A LEADER THEY NEITHER RESPECT NOR FEAR. >
< IF THIS SITUATION IS NOT DEALT WITH -- QUICKLY--THE DAMAGE WILL BECOME IRREPARABLE. >
< I HAVE ASSIGNED THE TASK TO MY FINEST NINJA. >
< WOLVERINE IS AS GOOD AS DEAD. >
< LORD SHINGEN, A PACKAGE FOR YOU, SIR. >
< OPEN IT. >


〈 NINJA HOODS. 〉
〈 AND A NOTE. 〉
TONIGHT.
〈 I UNDERESTIMATED HIM. 〉
〈 SUMMON THE HAND. 〉
〈 INFORM THEM THAT AN IDEAL OPPORTUNITY HAS ARISEN FOR THEM TO AVENGE THEIR FALLEN BRETHREN. AND THEIR HONOR AS ASSASSINS. 〉
〈 IS IT WISE TO STAY, SHINGEN? 〉
〈 IT IS NECESSARY. 〉
〈 YOUR LIFE IS TOO VALUABLE TO RISK! 〉
〈 MY LIFE IS NOTHING WITHOUT HONOR, AGAMI. 〉
〈 I MUST FACE HIM. 〉
〈 DO NOT WORRY, MY FRIEND. I DEFEATED WOLVERINE IN SINGLE-COMBAT BEFORE. I SHALL DO SO AGAIN. ONLY THIS TIME ... I WILL KILL HIM! 〉


THE NINJAS CAME LOADED FOR BEAR. I LEFT 'EM STRIPPED AN' CUFFED AT THE LOCAL COP HOUSE.
I KEPT THEIR WEAPONS FOR MYSELF.
I DON'T NORMALLY USE HARDWARE -- WITH MY PHYSICAL ASSETS, WHO NEEDS ANY -- BUT FOR THIS CAPER, I FIGURE EVERY LITTLE BIT'LL HELP.
THE CARPET O' MY HOTEL ROOM IS IMMACULATE -- THERE ISN'T A SIGN THAT A MAN DIED HERE NOT LONG AGO, OR THAT HIS KILLER ESCAPED THROUGH THE WINDOW. MY GOOD FRIEND, ASANO KIMURA -- CHOPPED BY MY LOVER, YUKIO.
MY LIFE'S TAKEN SOME PRETTY HARD SHOTS LATELY. I FLEW OUT HERE TO JAPAN CHASIN' MARIKO YASHIDA, THE WOMAN I LOVED, ONLY TO FIND HER MARRIED.
THEN, IN FRONT OF HER -- IN A SUPPOSEDLY FRIENDLY DUEL -- HER FATHER, SHINGEN, DRUGGED ME AN' BEAT ME NEAR TO DEATH AN', IN THE PROCESS, STRIPPED ME O' PRIDE, SELF-RESPECT. HONOR.
I DON'T KNOW WHICH HURT MORE.
SHINGEN THREW ME OUT TO DIE IN THE MUD. YUKIO FOUND ME, NURSED ME BACK TO HEALTH. WE BECAME INSEPARABLE. WE FELL IN LOVE. TROUBLE WAS, MY HEART OF HEARTS STILL BELONGED TO M'IKO. THEN, TOO LATE, I LEARNED YUKIO WORKED FOR SHINGEN.
SHE'D BEEN USIN' ME -- SHE CONNED ME INTO SNEAKIN' HER THROUGH THE DEFENSES OF SHINGEN'S SOLE RIVAL FOR THE TOP SPOT IN THE JAPANESE UNDERWORLD, SO SHE COULD KILL HIM.
AND LATER, WHEN ASANO GOT IN HER WAY...
... SHE KILLED HIM, TOO.
SHINGEN CALLED ME AN ANIMAL. FOR A TIME, I BELIEVED HIM.
WE WERE BOTH WRONG.
THAT MISTAKE IS GOING TO COST HIM HIS LIFE -- AND ME THE WOMEN I LOVE.

INTERLUDE:

THE FAMILY HISTORY ROOM OF CLAN YASHIDA, DEEP WITHIN THE ANCESTRAL STRONGHOLD.

< OH, BELOVED AND REVERED ANCESTORS, WHAT IS THE PATH OF DUTY? OF...TRUTH? ARE THEY THE SAME? AND, IF NOT, WHICH IS PARAMOUNT?! >

< I LOVE WOLVERINE. YET, WHEN MY FATHER RETURNED AS IF FROM THE DEAD, AND BID ME MARRY ANOTHER TO SATISFY AN OBLIGATION MY FATHER HAD INCURRED, I DID SO-- THOUGH IT BROKE MY HEART. >

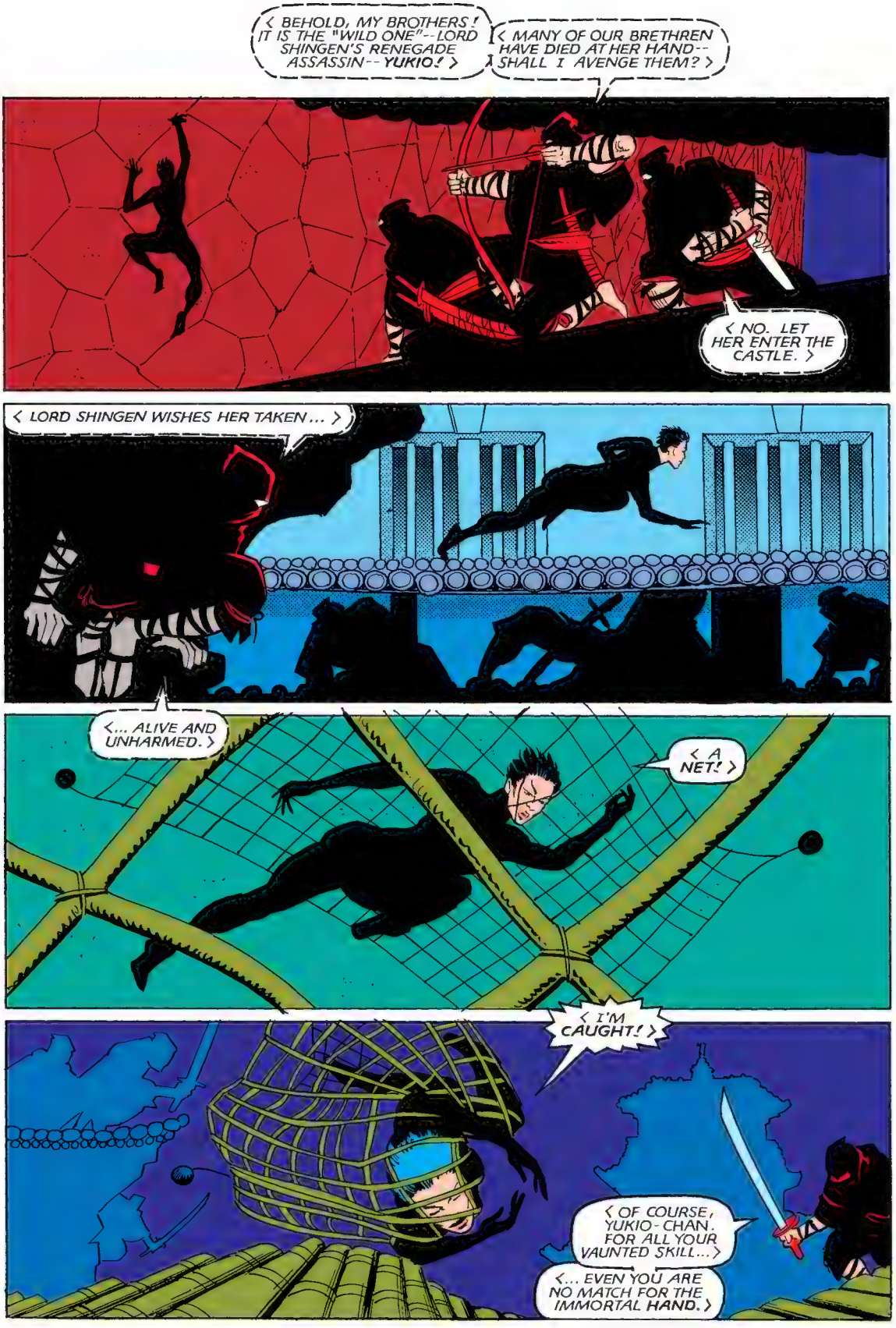
< MY HUSBAND, NOBURU-HIDEKI, IS A CRUEL MAN-- BUT I KNOW NOW THAT HE IS BUT A PALE REFLECTION OF MY FATHER. THE MAN I REMEMBER FROM CHILDHOOD IS NO MORE-- IF INDEED HE EVER WAS. SHINGEN'S AMBITION KNOWS NO BOUNDS, AND HE WILL USE ANY MEANS-- NO MATTER HOW HEINOUS-- TO ACHIEVE HIS GOALS. >

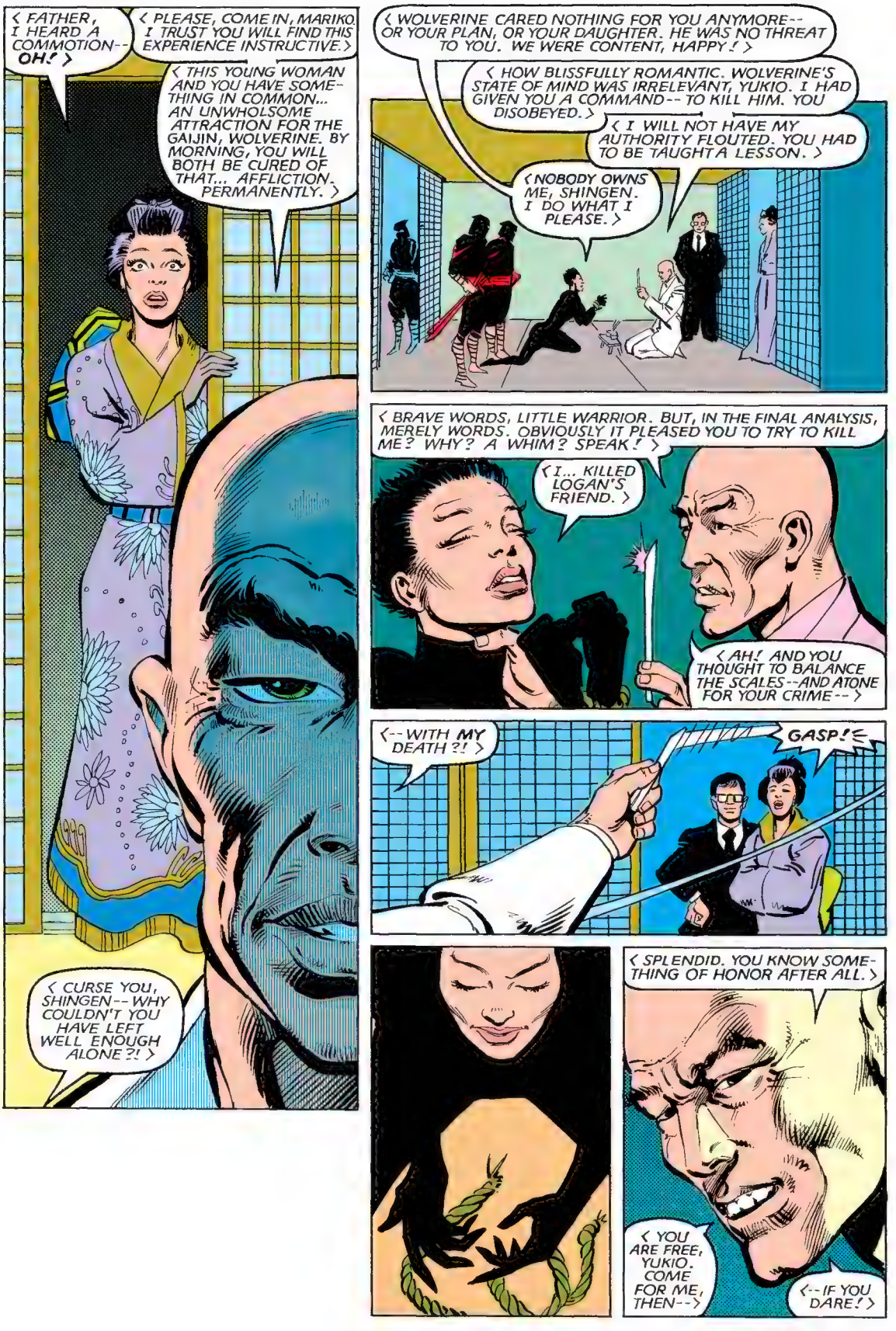
< WHAT AM I TO DO?! HOW MAY HONOR BE SERVED? SHINGEN IS **EVIL!** HIS VERY EXISTENCE DISGRACES THIS HOUSE-- AND OUR MOST ANCIENT NAME-- YET HE IS MY **FATHER!** BY DESTROYING HIM, I... DESTROY MYSELF. >

< GODS AND ANCESTORS, GRANT ME WISDOM. GRANT ME STRENGTH! I AM SO AFRAID. HELP ME, I BEG YOU-- ANSWER ME! >

< WHAT AM I TO **DO?!?** >

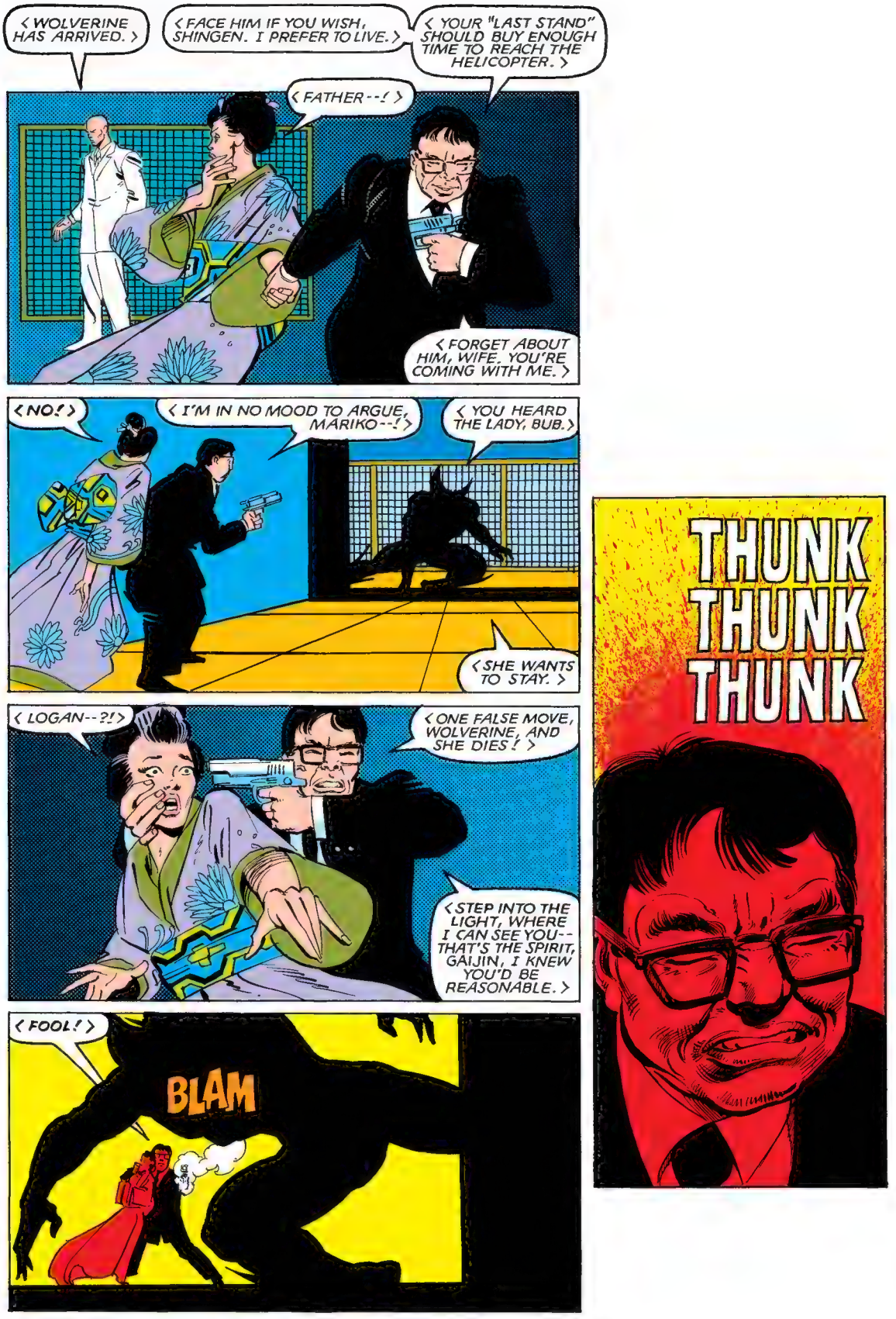
ELSEWHERE...
...LATER...
〈 THE SENTRY DOGS-- DEAD! 〉
THUNK THUNK THUNK
〈 GOTCHA! 〉


< BEHOLD, MY BROTHERS! IT IS THE "WILD ONE"--LORD SHINGEN'S RENEGADE ASSASSIN--YUKIO! >
< MANY OF OUR BRETHREN HAVE DIED AT HER HAND--SHALL I AVENGE THEM? >
< NO. LET HER ENTER THE CASTLE. >
< LORD SHINGEN WISHES HER TAKEN... >
<... ALIVE AND UNHARMED. >
< A NET! >
< I'M CAUGHT! >
< OF COURSE, YUKIO-CHAN. FOR ALL YOUR VAUNTED SKILL... >
<... EVEN YOU ARE NO MATCH FOR THE IMMORTAL HAND. >

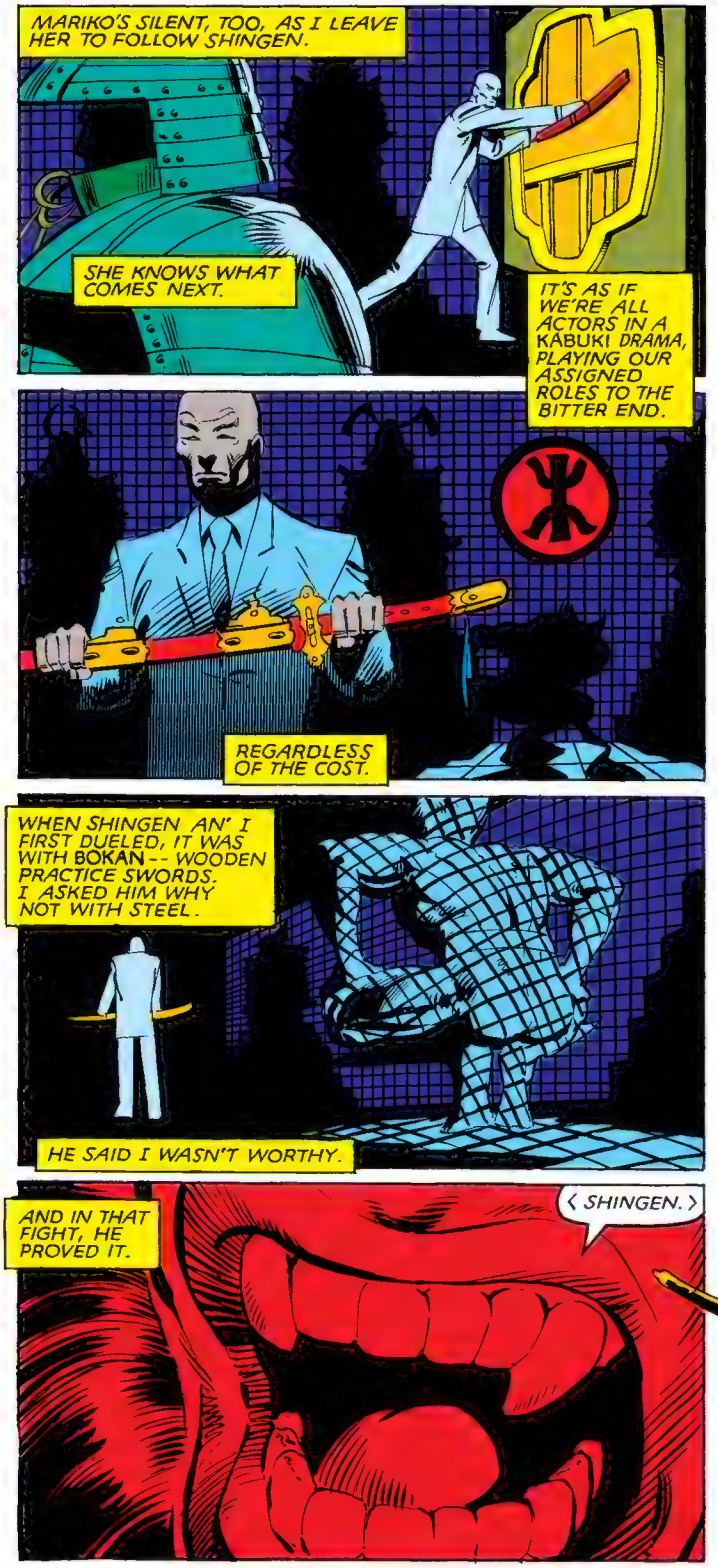

〈 FATHER, I HEARD A COMMOTION-- OH! 〉
〈 PLEASE, COME IN, MARIKO. I TRUST YOU WILL FIND THIS EXPERIENCE INSTRUCTIVE. 〉
〈 THIS YOUNG WOMAN AND YOU HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON... AN UNWHOLSOME ATTRACTION FOR THE GAIJIN, WOLVERINE. BY MORNING, YOU WILL BOTH BE CURED OF THAT... AFFLICTION. PERMANENTLY. 〉
〈 CURSE YOU, SHINGEN-- WHY COULDN'T YOU HAVE LEFT WELL ENOUGH ALONE?! 〉
〈 WOLVERINE CARED NOTHING FOR YOU ANYMORE-- OR YOUR PLAN, OR YOUR DAUGHTER. HE WAS NO THREAT TO YOU. WE WERE CONTENT, HAPPY! 〉
〈 HOW BLISSFULLY ROMANTIC. WOLVERINE'S STATE OF MIND WAS IRRELEVANT, YUKIO. I HAD GIVEN YOU A COMMAND-- TO KILL HIM. YOU DISOBEYED. 〉
〈 I WILL NOT HAVE MY AUTHORITY FLOUTED. YOU HAD TO BE TAUGHT A LESSON. 〉
〈 NOBODY OWNS ME, SHINGEN. I DO WHAT I PLEASE. 〉
〈 BRAVE WORDS, LITTLE WARRIOR. BUT, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, MERELY WORDS. OBVIOUSLY IT PLEASED YOU TO TRY TO KILL ME? WHY? A WHIM? SPEAK! 〉
〈 I... KILLED LOGAN'S FRIEND. 〉
〈 AH! AND YOU THOUGHT TO BALANCE THE SCALES--AND ATONE FOR YOUR CRIME-- 〉
〈--WITH MY DEATH?! 〉
GASP!
〈 SPLENDID. YOU KNOW SOMETHING OF HONOR AFTER ALL. 〉
〈 YOU ARE FREE, YUKIO. COME FOR ME, THEN--〉
〈--IF YOU DARE! 〉

WHUKK
< YOUR TECHNIQUE IS SUPERB, YUKIO... >
KRAK
<... YOUR SPEED AND POWER ALMOST BEYOND COMPARE. >
< BUT YOU ARE NO MATCH FOR ME. AND NEITHER IS YOUR PARAMOUR-- EH?! >
< MARIKO! HOW DARE YOU INTERFERE--?! >
< STOP IT, FATHER! YOU'RE KILLING HER! >
< OBVIOUSLY. >
< DO NOT TEMPT MY WRATH, CHILD, LEST YOU--! >
< MILORD-- THE RADIO! >
< LORD SHINGEN, THIS IS POST ONE--
< REPEAT YOUR MESSAGE, POST ONE. WE WERE CUT OFF. >
< THIS IS LORD SHINGEN-- REPORT! >

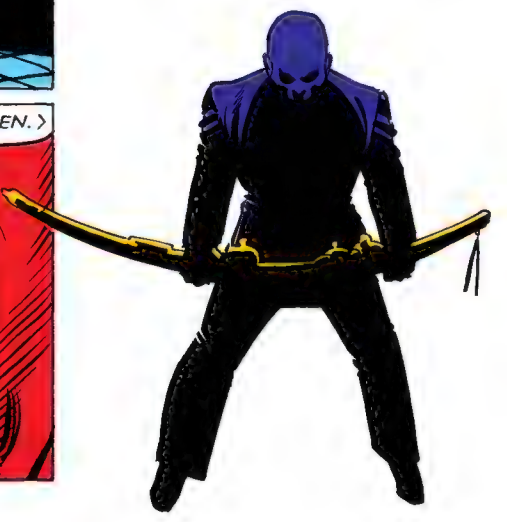
< RESPOND AT ONCE, DO YOU HEAR-- >
<-- ANSWER ME!! >


〈 WOLVERINE HAS ARRIVED. 〉
〈 FACE HIM IF YOU WISH, SHINGEN. I PREFER TO LIVE. 〉
〈 YOUR "LAST STAND" SHOULD BUY ENOUGH TIME TO REACH THE HELICOPTER. 〉
〈 FATHER--! 〉
〈 FORGET ABOUT HIM, WIFE. YOU'RE COMING WITH ME. 〉
〈 NO! 〉
〈 I'M IN NO MOOD TO ARGUE, MARIKO--! 〉
〈 YOU HEARD THE LADY, BUB. 〉
〈 SHE WANTS TO STAY. 〉
〈 LOGAN--?! 〉
〈 ONE FALSE MOVE, WOLVERINE, AND SHE DIES! 〉
〈 STEP INTO THE LIGHT, WHERE I CAN SEE YOU-- THAT'S THE SPIRIT, GAIJIN, I KNEW YOU'D BE REASONABLE. 〉
〈 FOOL! 〉
BLAM
THUNK
THUNK
THUNK

< GOTCHA! >
< HOLD THAT POSE, MILADY. >
AAIII--!
< DON'T WORRY, LOVER. I DIDN'T CUT MARIKO, JUST HER OUTFIT. >
< YOU LOOK... PRETTY SPRY... ALL THINGS CONSIDERED. >
< I'M TOUGH. WHEN I HAVE TO BE. >
< I'D LIKE TO STAY, TO FIGHT BY YOUR SIDE. >
< YOU CAN'T. >
WITHOUT ANOTHER WORD, SHE'S GONE.
I CAN'T FORGIVE HER FOR ASANO-- AND I CAN NEVER REPAY HER FOR MARIKO--
--SO I LET HER GO.


MARIKO'S SILENT, TOO, AS I LEAVE HER TO FOLLOW SHINGEN.
SHE KNOWS WHAT COMES NEXT.
IT'S AS IF WE'RE ALL ACTORS IN A KABUKI DRAMA, PLAYING OUR ASSIGNED ROLES TO THE BITTER END.
REGARDLESS OF THE COST.
WHEN SHINGEN AN' I FIRST DUELED, IT WAS WITH BOKAN -- WOODEN PRACTICE SWORDS. I ASKED HIM WHY NOT WITH STEEL.
HE SAID I WASN'T WORTHY.
AND IN THAT FIGHT, HE PROVED IT.
〈 SHINGEN. 〉

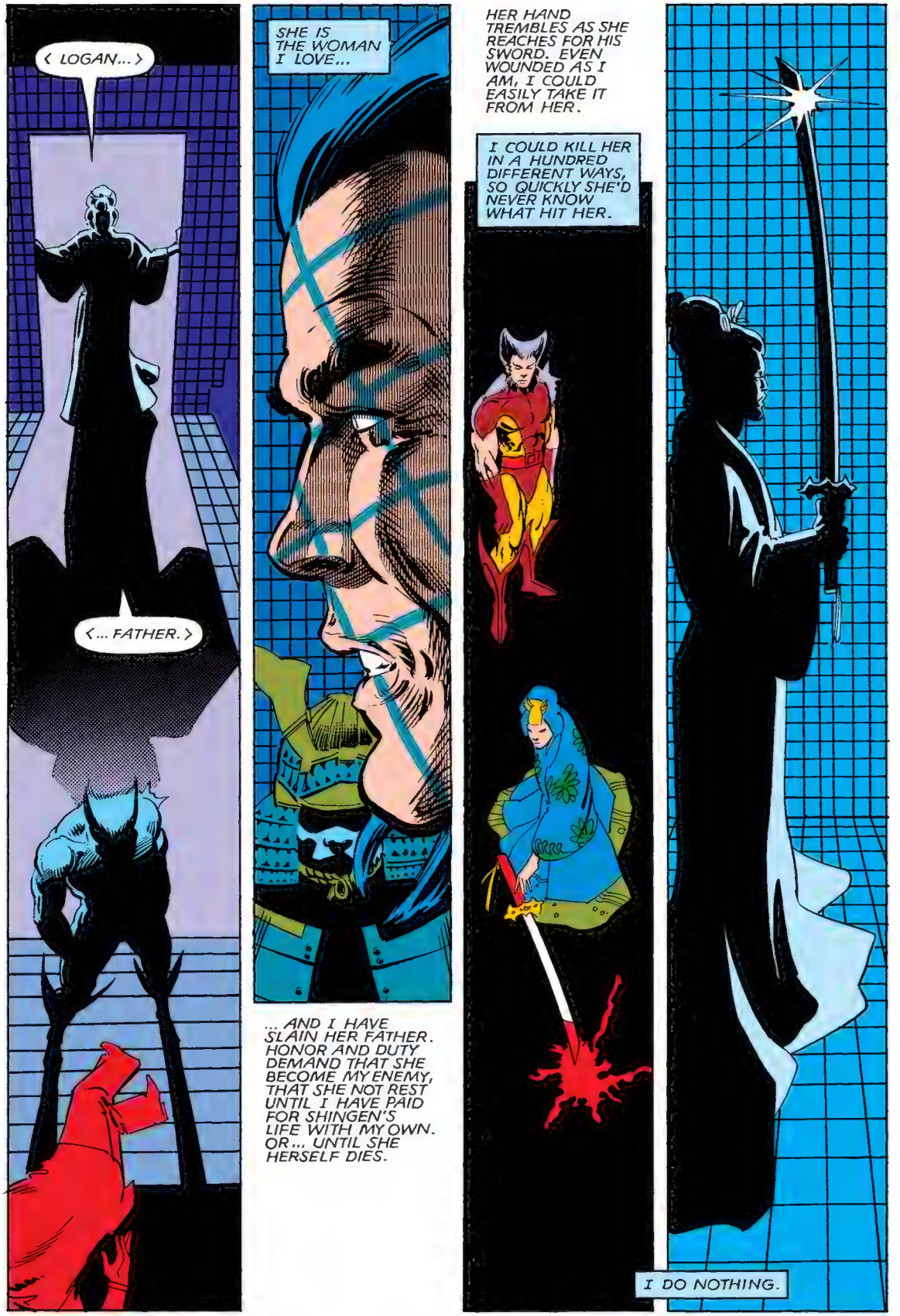
〈 AM I WORTHY NOW? 〉

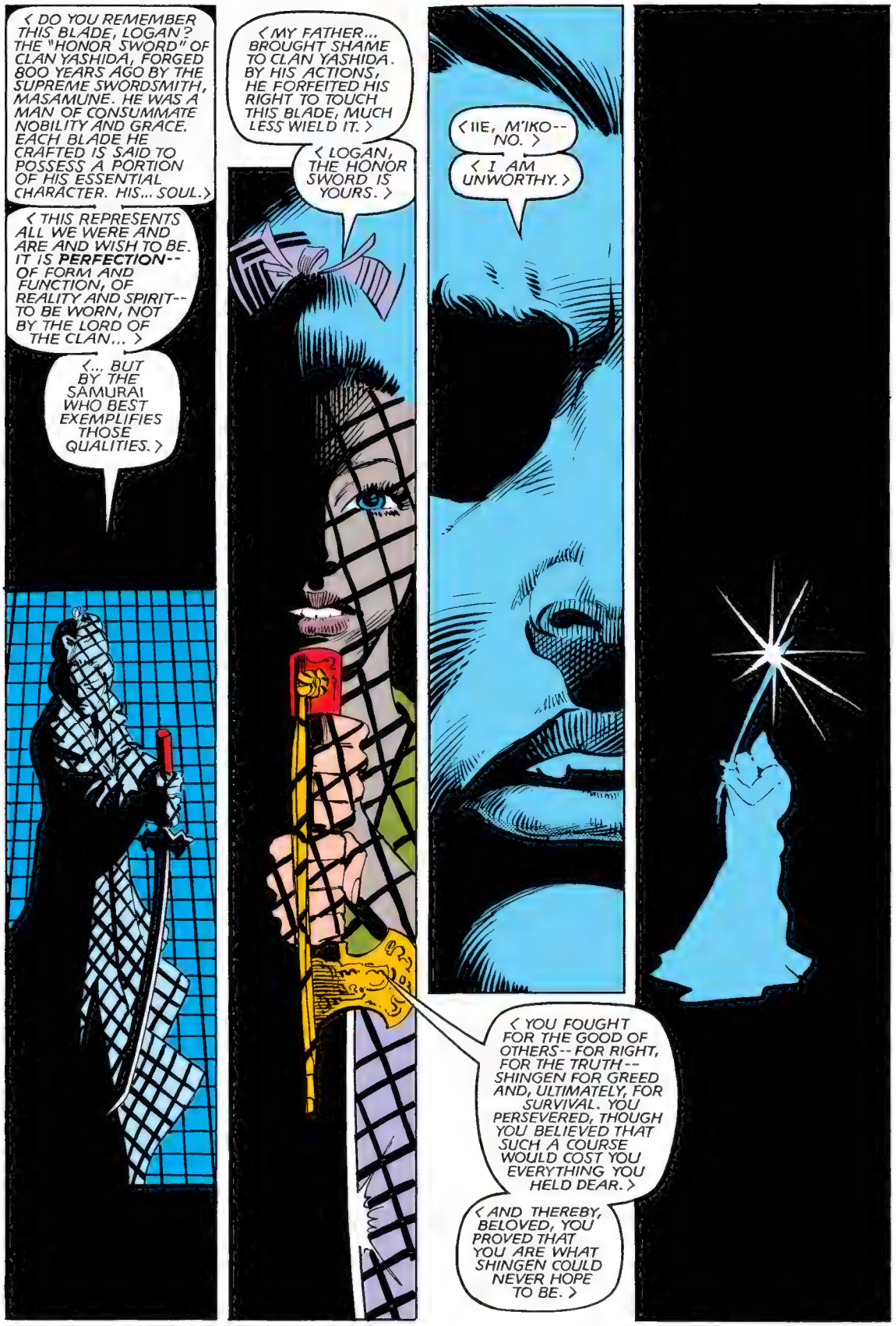


< THAT, GAIJIN... >
< ... REMAINS TO BE SEEN. >
WE MOVE AS ONE...
... BLADES HISSING THROUGH THE AIR...
... AS WE PASS.
I CUT DEEP.
SHINGEN CUTS DEEPER.
I'M HURT BAD. HE KNOWS IT.
BUT NO QUARTER IS ASKED...

... AND NONE GIVEN.

SNIKT


〈 LOGAN... 〉
〈... FATHER. 〉
SHE IS THE WOMAN I LOVE...
... AND I HAVE SLAIN HER FATHER. HONOR AND DUTY DEMAND THAT SHE BECOME MY ENEMY, THAT SHE NOT REST UNTIL I HAVE PAID FOR SHINGEN'S LIFE WITH MY OWN. OR... UNTIL SHE HERSELF DIES.
HER HAND TREMBLES AS SHE REACHES FOR HIS SWORD. EVEN WOUNDED AS I AM, I COULD EASILY TAKE IT FROM HER.
I COULD KILL HER IN A HUNDRED DIFFERENT WAYS, SO QUICKLY SHE'D NEVER KNOW WHAT HIT HER.
I DO NOTHING.


< DO YOU REMEMBER THIS BLADE, LOGAN? THE "HONOR SWORD" OF CLAN YASHIDA, FORGED 800 YEARS AGO BY THE SUPREME SWORDSMITH, MASAMUNE. HE WAS A MAN OF CONSUMMATE NOBILITY AND GRACE. EACH BLADE HE CRAFTED IS SAID TO POSSESS A PORTION OF HIS ESSENTIAL CHARACTER. HIS... SOUL.>
< THIS REPRESENTS ALL WE WERE AND ARE AND WISH TO BE. IT IS **PERFECTION**-- OF FORM AND FUNCTION, OF REALITY AND SPIRIT-- TO BE WORN, NOT BY THE LORD OF THE CLAN... >
<... BUT BY THE SAMURAI WHO BEST EXEMPLIFIES THOSE QUALITIES. >
< MY FATHER... BROUGHT SHAME TO CLAN YASHIDA. BY HIS ACTIONS, HE FORFEITED HIS RIGHT TO TOUCH THIS BLADE, MUCH LESS WIELD IT. >
< LOGAN, THE HONOR SWORD IS YOURS. >
< IIE, M'IKO-- NO. >
< I AM UNWORTHY. >
< YOU FOUGHT FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS-- FOR RIGHT, FOR THE TRUTH-- SHINGEN FOR GREED AND, ULTIMATELY, FOR SURVIVAL. YOU PERSEVERED, THOUGH YOU BELIEVED THAT SUCH A COURSE WOULD COST YOU EVERYTHING YOU HELD DEAR. >
< AND THEREBY, BELOVED, YOU PROVED THAT YOU ARE WHAT SHINGEN COULD NEVER HOPE TO BE. >

MARIKO TELLS ME LATER THAT, HAD SHINGEN SURVIVED OUR DUEL, SHE WOULD HAVE SLAIN HIM HERSELF -- AND THEN, IF SUCCESSFUL, TAKEN HER OWN LIFE THROUGH SEPPUKU, RITUAL SUICIDE. IT WAS TOLERABLE FOR NOBURU TO ACT LIKE A SWINE -- INDEED, ALMOST EXPECTED -- BECAUSE HE WAS A MAN WITHOUT HONOR TO BEGIN WITH. BUT FOR SHINGEN TO BEHAVE IN SUCH A MANNER WAS AN UNPARDONABLE CRIME -- THE ULTIMATE BETRAYAL OF THE CLAN. AND, AS HEIR TO THE DOMAIN, IT WAS M'IKO'S DUTY TO METE OUT PUNISHMENT.
FORTUNATELY, I BEAT HER TO IT.
I'M IMPRESSED. IN HER OWN WAY, MARIKO MAKES AS FORMIDABLE AN ADVERSARY AS ME.
WE STAY IN THE MOUNTAINS WHILE I HEAL. THEN, IN SPRING, I FINALLY WRITE THE X-MEN...
...TO TELL 'EM WHAT'S HAPPENED AN', MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHAT'S ABOUT TO HAPPEN.
I'D GIVE ANYTHING TO SEE THEIR FACES WHEN THEY OPEN THE LETTER.
His Imperial Majesty
Hirohito
Emperor of Japan
requests the pleasure
of your company
at the wedding of
Lady Mariko
of Clan Yashida
to
Logan
Hey Elf - don't forget the BEER! - W.
R.S.V.P.

CHRIS CLAREMONT
WRITER

FRANK MILLER
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JOSEF RUBINSTEIN
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LETTERER

LYNN VARLEY
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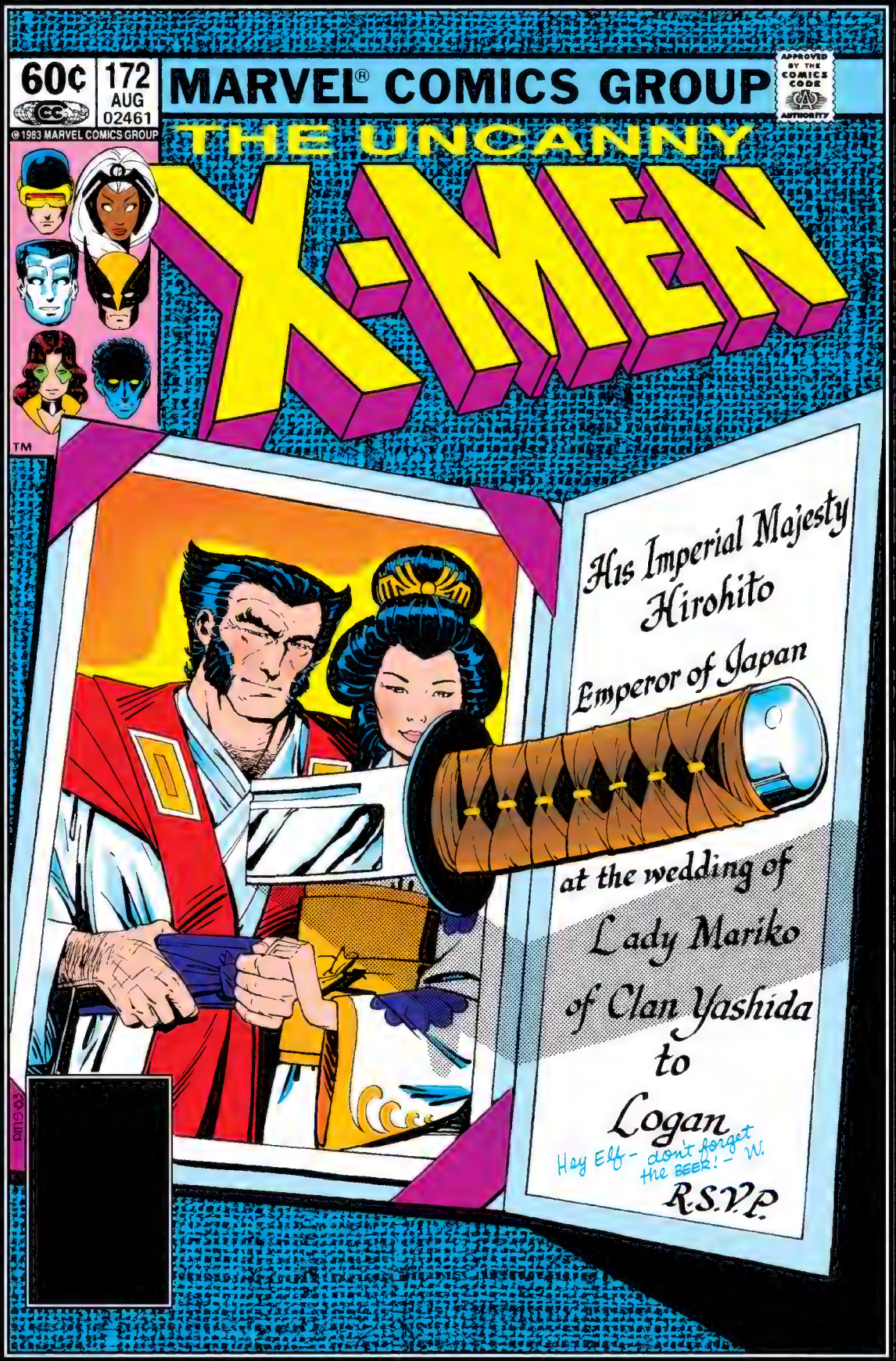
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THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
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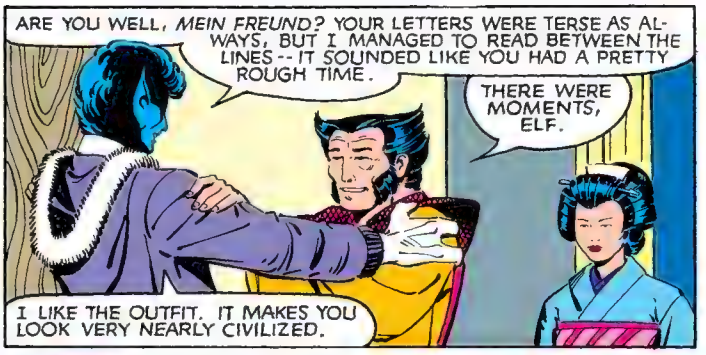
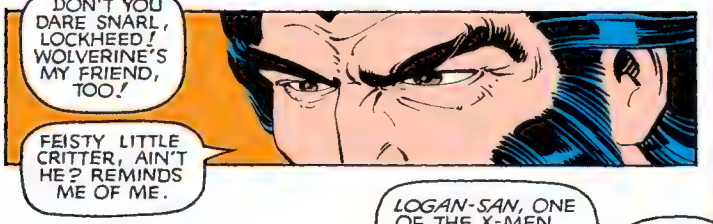
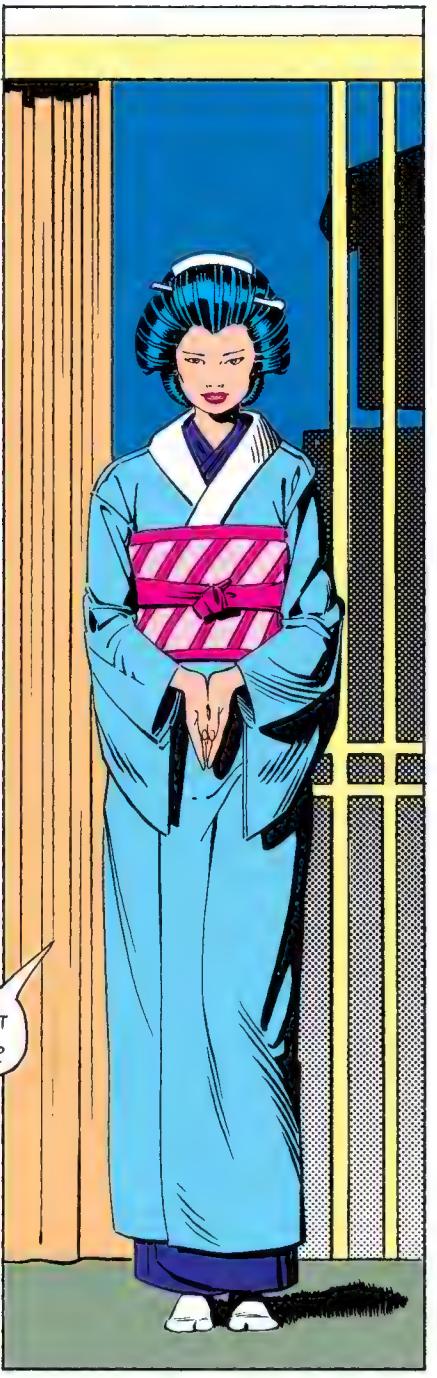
TŌKYŌ...
... THE UPPER CLASS MEGURO DISTRICT...
THE BUILDING STANDS SIXTY STORIES TALL, 55 COMMERCIAL, THE REST A SINGLE LUXURY APARTMENT. IT'S WHERE THE DAIMYO OF CLAN YASHIDA STAYS WHENEVER HE'S IN TOWN.
TEN WEEKS AGO, UPON YASHIDA SHINGEN'S DEATH, THE TITLE PASSED TO HIS FIRST-BORN, HIS DAUGHTER MARIKO. I'M HER LOVER, HER CHAMPION--AND IN FIVE DAYS, I BECOME HER CONSORT.
A MAN SHOULD HAVE HIS FRIENDS BESIDE HIM AT HIS WEDDIN'. THESE ARE MINE-- THE X-MEN.
WOLVERINE!
IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU, TOVARISCH. WE HAVE BEEN TOO LONG APART.
WHAT A TRIP, LOGAN! WE HAD AN ENTIRE 747, ALL TO OURSELVES! THE PILOT SAID IT WAS THE PLANE THE EMPEROR USES!
MY FIANCÉE HAS CLOUT, KIDDO.
WELCOME TO JAPAN.

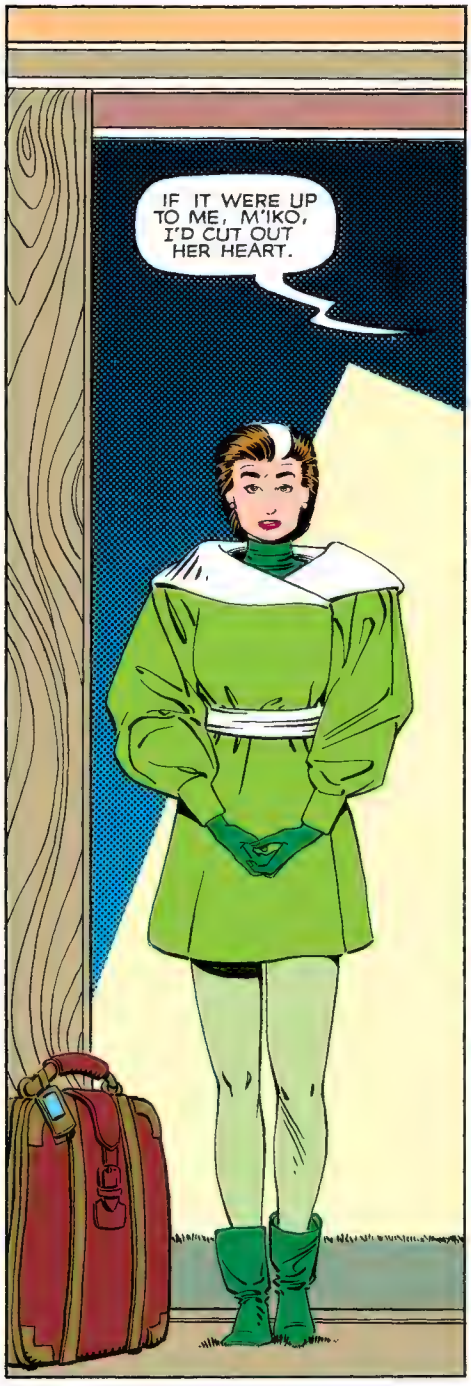

ARE YOU WELL, *MEIN FREUND*? YOUR LETTERS WERE TERSE AS ALWAYS, BUT I MANAGED TO READ BETWEEN THE LINES -- IT SOUNDED LIKE YOU HAD A PRETTY ROUGH TIME.
THERE WERE MOMENTS, ELF.
I LIKE THE OUTFIT. IT MAKES YOU LOOK VERY NEARLY CIVILIZED.



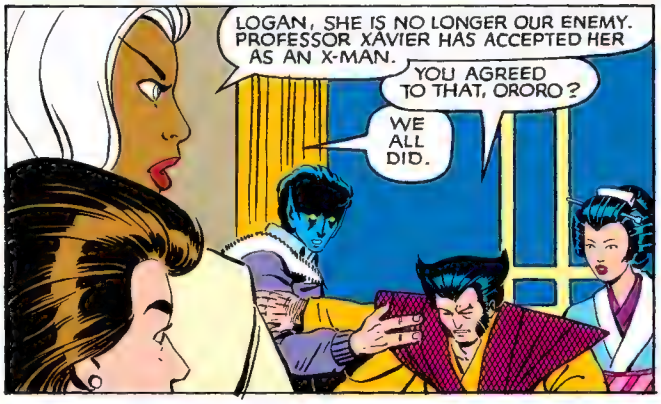


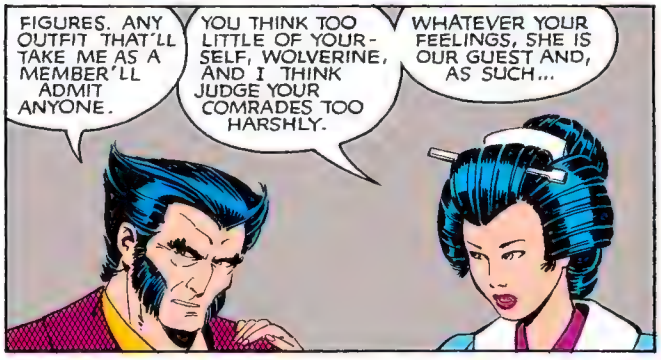
*I'M A **MUTANT**, JUST LIKE ALL THE X-MEN, BORN WITH SPECIAL -- UNIQUE -- POWERS AN' ABILITIES. IN MY CASE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, I HAVE ENHANCED PHYSICAL SENSES: SIGHT, HEARING, TASTE, TOUCH, SMELL.*

I KNEW WHO WAS THERE THE INSTANT SHE ENTERED.

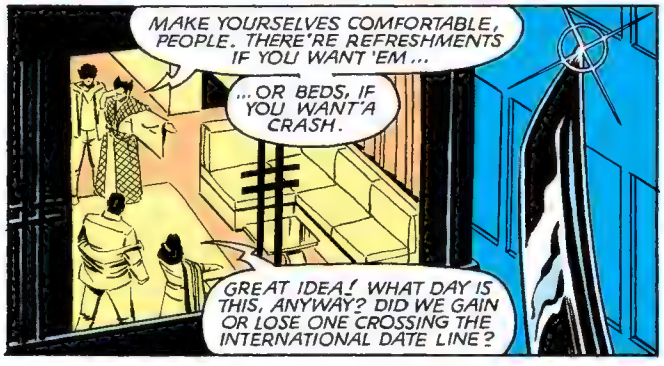


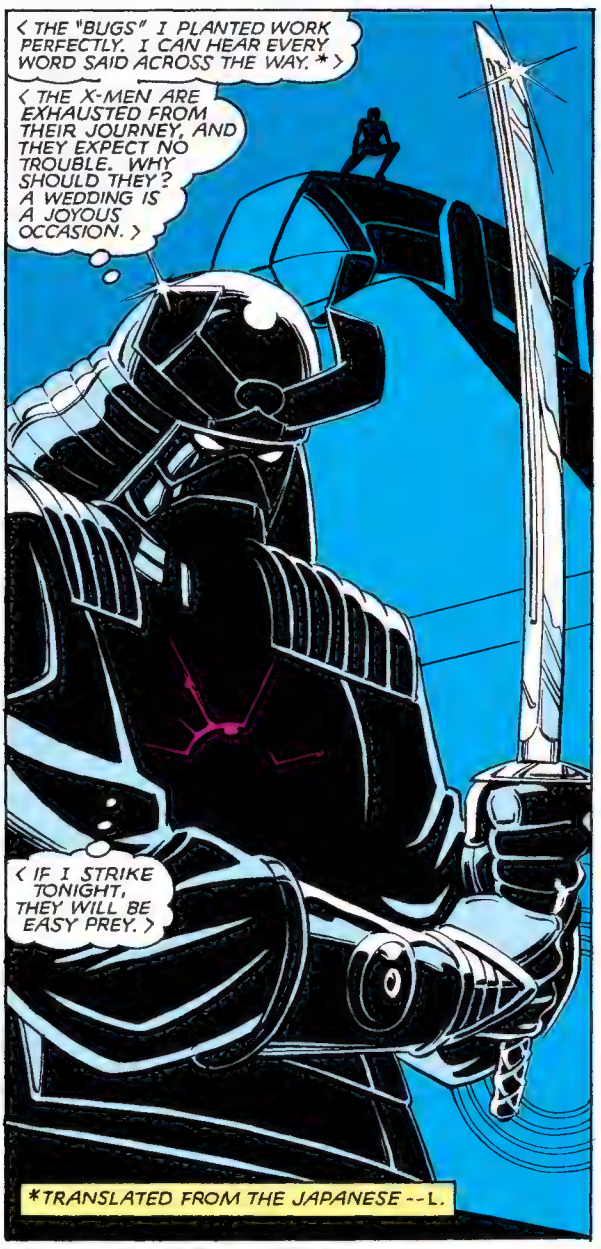
THE KID'S NAME IS **ROGUE**. WE TUSSLED A WHILE BACK, AT THE PENTAGON-- AN' BEFORE THAT, SHE NEARLY KILLED A GOOD FRIEND O' MINE. I DON'T MIND BEIN' USED AS A PUNCHIN' BAG-- COMES WITH THE TERRITORY-- BUT WHAT SHE DID T' **CAROL DANVERS** I'LL NEVER FORGET. OR FORGIVE.




FIGURES. ANY OUTFIT THAT'LL TAKE ME AS A MEMBER'LL ADMIT ANYONE.
YOU THINK TOO LITTLE OF YOURSELF, WOLVERINE, AND I THINK JUDGE YOUR COMRADES TOO HARSHLY.
WHATEVER YOUR FEELINGS, SHE IS OUR GUEST AND, AS SUCH...

...WILL BE TREATED WITH ALL DUE COURTESY AND RESPECT.
WELCOME, *ROGUE-SAN*. MAY YOUR STAY WITH US BE A HAPPY ONE.
THANK YOU, LADY MARIKO.


MAKE YOURSELVES COMFORTABLE, PEOPLE. THERE'RE REFRESHMENTS IF YOU WANT 'EM...
...OR BEDS, IF YOU WANT'A CRASH.
GREAT IDEA! WHAT DAY IS THIS, ANYWAY? DID WE GAIN OR LOSE ONE CROSSING THE INTERNATIONAL DATE LINE?



Stan Lee PRESENTS...

Scarlet IN GLORY

CHRIS CLAREMONT
WRITER

PAUL SMITH
PENCILER

BOB WIACEK
INKER

GLYNIS WEIN, *colorist* • TOM ORZECHOWSKI, *letterer*

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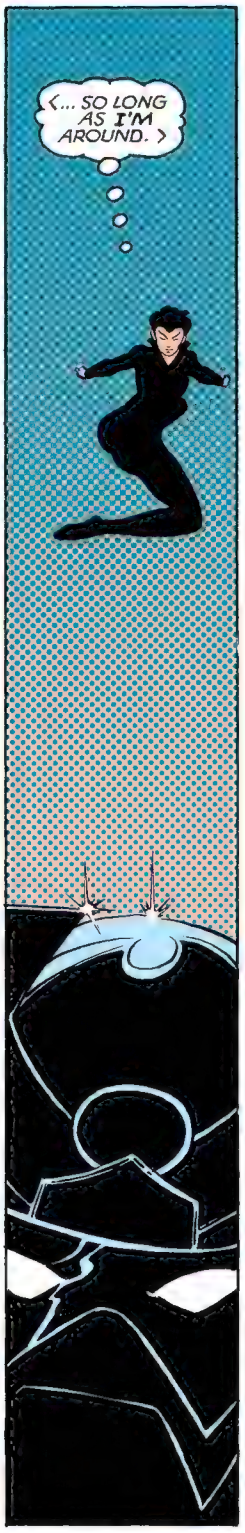
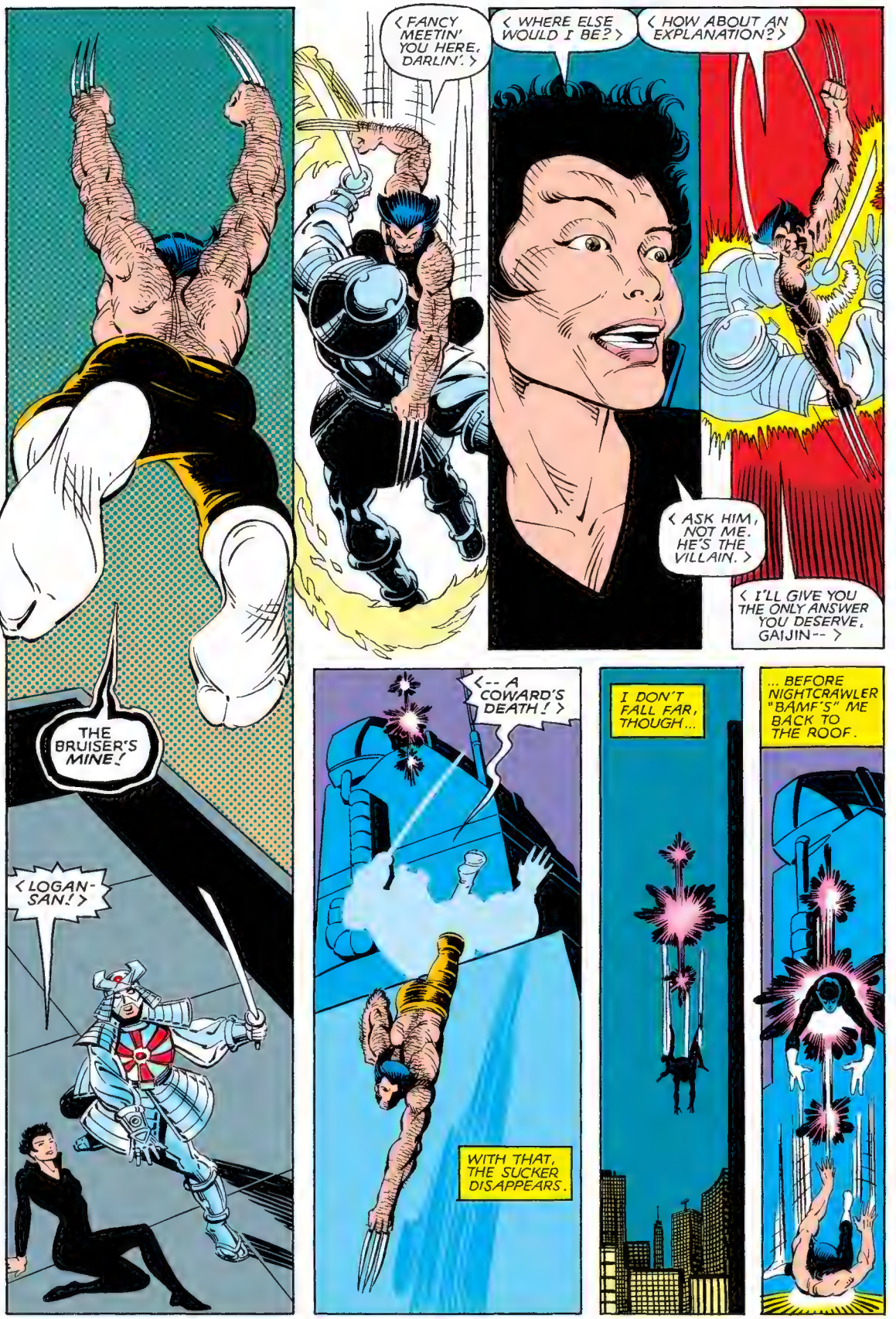
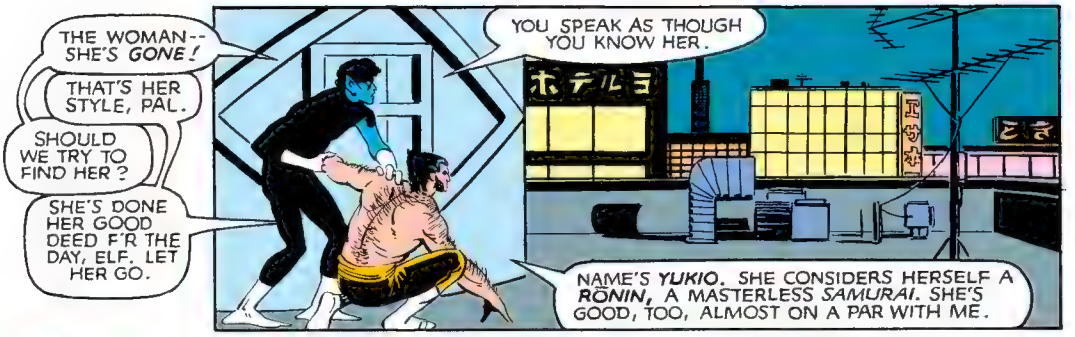
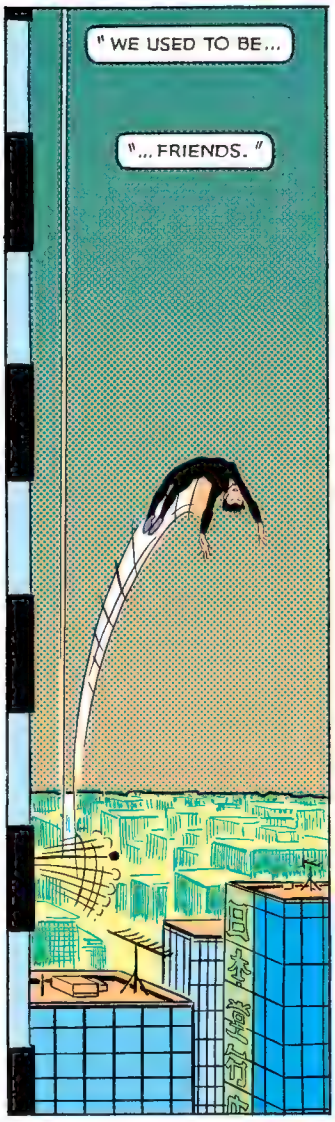
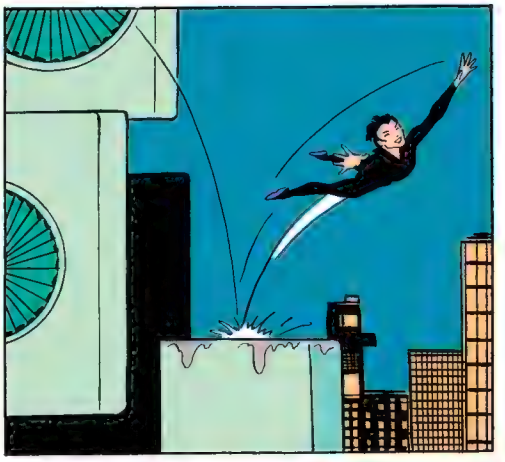


KRAK
〈HE'S A PERFECT TARGET. I COULD HAVE KILLED HIM EASILY.〉
〈BUT, FOR NOW, I PREFER HIM ALIVE FOR QUESTIONING.〉
〈GOTCHA!〉
〈WHO--?!!〉
〈Uh-oh!〉
THAT SOUND--!
I DIDN'T HEAR ANY-THING.
FROM THE ROOF NEXT DOOR--FLESH ON METAL, A FIGHTING KICK!
〈I AM THE SILVER SAMURAI, GIRL.〉
〈TO ATTACK ME IS DEATH!〉
'PORT ME OVER THERE, ELF!
BAMF
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?
TRUST ME.
〈MY ARMOR IS PROOF AGAINST YOUR STRONG-EST BLOWS.〉
〈AND MY ENERGY BLADE CAN CUT THROUGH ANYTHING!〉
WHAT'D I TELL YOU?
GRAB THE LADY, ELF. MAKE SURE SHE'S SAFE.


THE BRUISER'S MINE!
< LOGAN-SAN! >
< FANCY MEETIN' YOU HERE, DARLIN'. >
< WHERE ELSE WOULD I BE? >
< HOW ABOUT AN EXPLANATION? >
< ASK HIM, NOT ME. HE'S THE VILLAIN. >
< I'LL GIVE YOU THE ONLY ANSWER YOU DESERVE, GAIJIN-- >
<-- A COWARD'S DEATH! >
WITH THAT, THE SUCKER DISAPPEARS.
I DON'T FALL FAR, THOUGH...
... BEFORE NIGHTCRAWLER "BAMF'S" ME BACK TO THE ROOF.


THE WOMAN-- SHE'S GONE!
THAT'S HER STYLE, PAL.
SHOULD WE TRY TO FIND HER?
SHE'S DONE HER GOOD DEED F'R THE DAY, ELF. LET HER GO.
YOU SPEAK AS THOUGH YOU KNOW HER.
NAME'S YUKIO. SHE CONSIDERS HERSELF A RŌNIN, A MASTERLESS SAMURAI. SHE'S GOOD, TOO, ALMOST ON A PAR WITH ME.

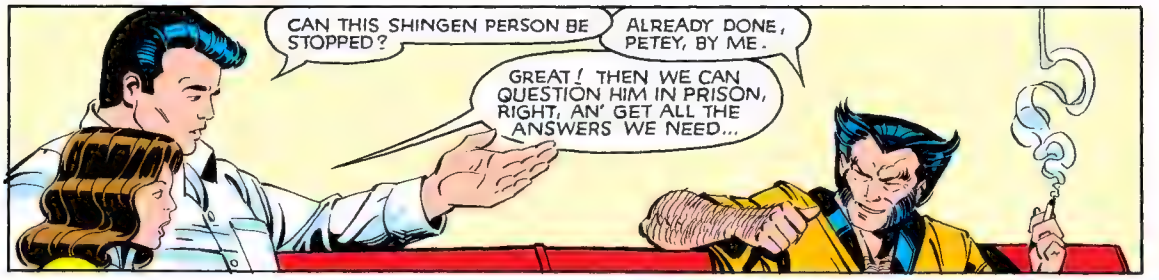

" WE USED TO BE...
"... FRIENDS. "

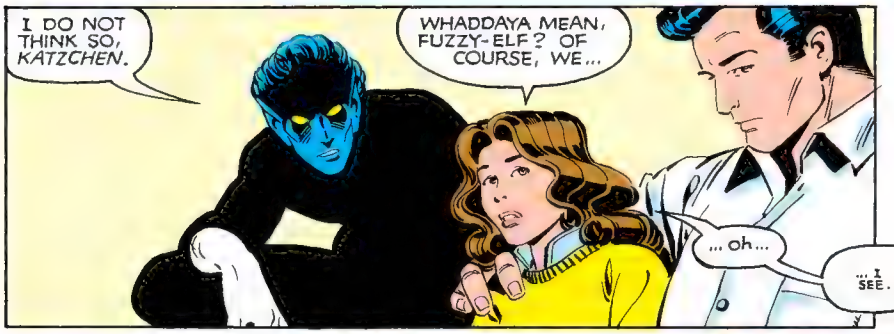


< MY FOOT! >
< I SLIPPED! >
< I'M FALLING! >

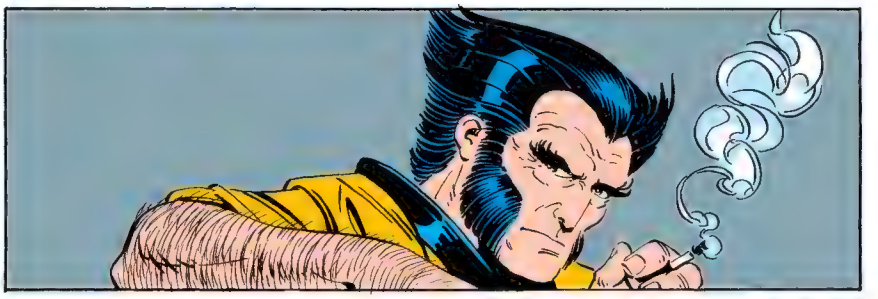
< BY MY ANCESTORS!! >

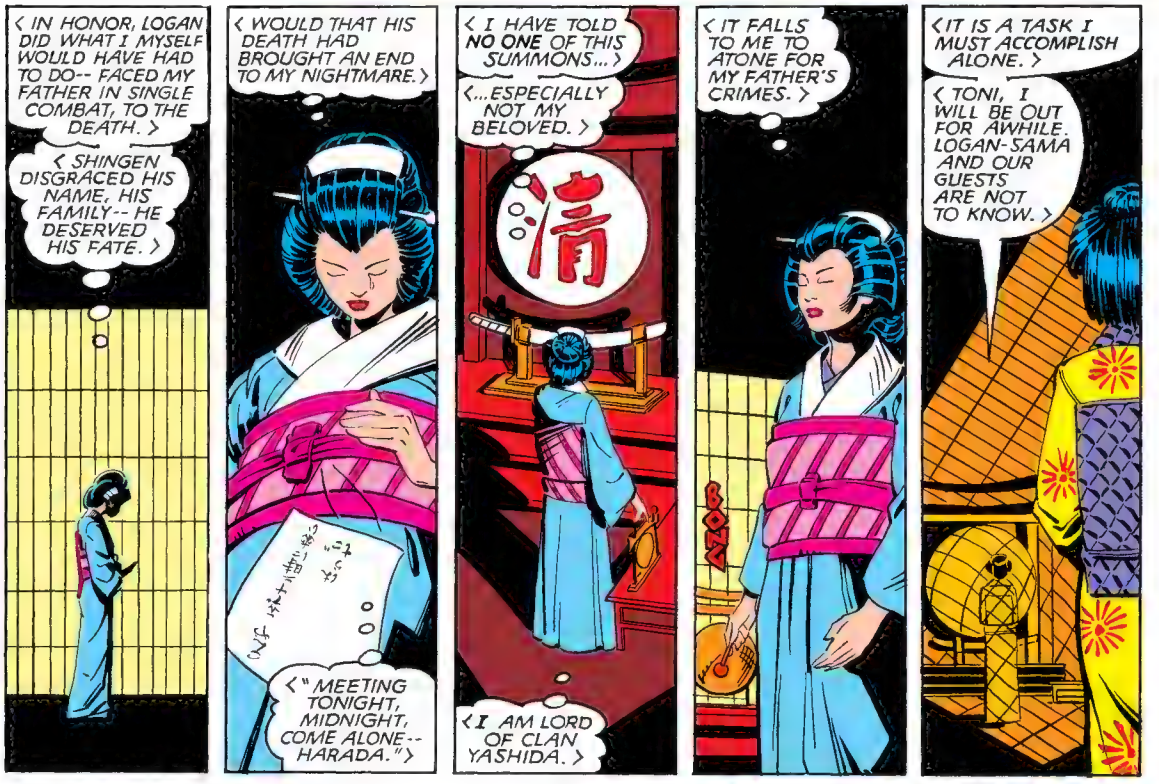
DO NOT BE AFRAID, I SHALL NOT DROP YOU.
I AM STORM.
I KNOW-- FRIEND OF LOGAN'S.
SO WAS I-- AND A LOT MORE--
--ONCE.
WHAT A RIDE-- ONE IN A MILLION-- I LOVED IT!
YOU NEARLY DIED.
THAT'S WHAT MADE THE EXPERIENCE SO EXQUISITE.
DEATH HOLDS NO TERRORS FOR YOU?
LIFE IS THE ULTIMATE ADVENTURE, WIND-RIDER, AND DEATH THE PRIZE THAT AWAITS US ALL.
SINCE IT'S INEVITABLE, WHY WORRY ABOUT IT?
SAYONARA, ORORO-SAN...
... UNTIL WE MEET AGAIN.
THE WOMAN IS MAD...
... AND YET, I WISH I COULD LAUGH SO.
LATER...
I RECOGNIZED THE MAN--KENIUCHIO HARADA, THE SILVER SAMURAI. HE AND HIS MISTRESS, VIPER, FOUGHT THE NEW MUTANTS RECENTLY, AND KILLED ONE OF THEM, XI'AN COY MANH. *
WAS HE FOLLOWING US, LOGAN, OR YOU? IS THERE A CONNECTION BETWEEN HIM AND YOU, HIM AND MARIKO ?
MAYBE SO. MARIKO'S DAD, SHINGEN, USED THE CLAN AS A POWER BASE FROM WHICH HE SEIZED CONTROL OF THE JAPANESE UNDERWORLD. HE WAS AN AMBITIOUS MAN. I DOUBT HE'D BE SATISFIED WITH THAT. HE MAY HAVE BEEN WORKIN' WITH VIPER TO EXPAND HIS INFLUENCE WORLD-WIDE.
*SEE NEW MUTANTS #'S 5-7 --L.


CAN THIS SHINGEN PERSON BE STOPPED?
ALREADY DONE, PETEY, BY ME.
GREAT! THEN WE CAN QUESTION HIM IN PRISON, RIGHT, AN' GET ALL THE ANSWERS WE NEED...



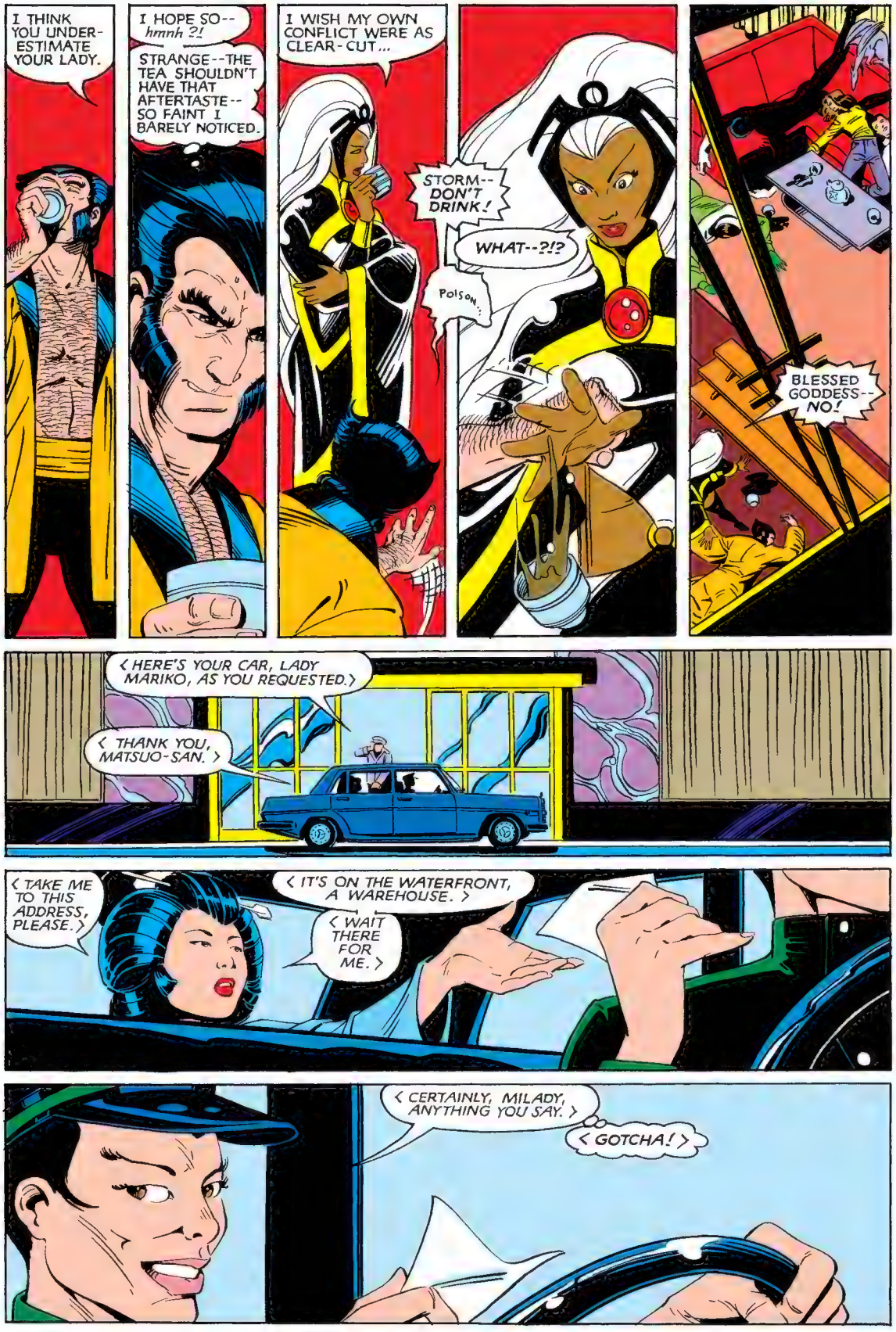
MOMENTS LIKE THIS, I FEEL SORRY FOR THE KID. SHE CARES FOR ME, BELIEVES IN ME-- BUT EVERY SO OFTEN, SHE GETS REMINDED-- HARD-- THAT WE COME FROM TWO DIFFERENT WORLDS. AN' THAT MINE ISN'T VERY NICE.

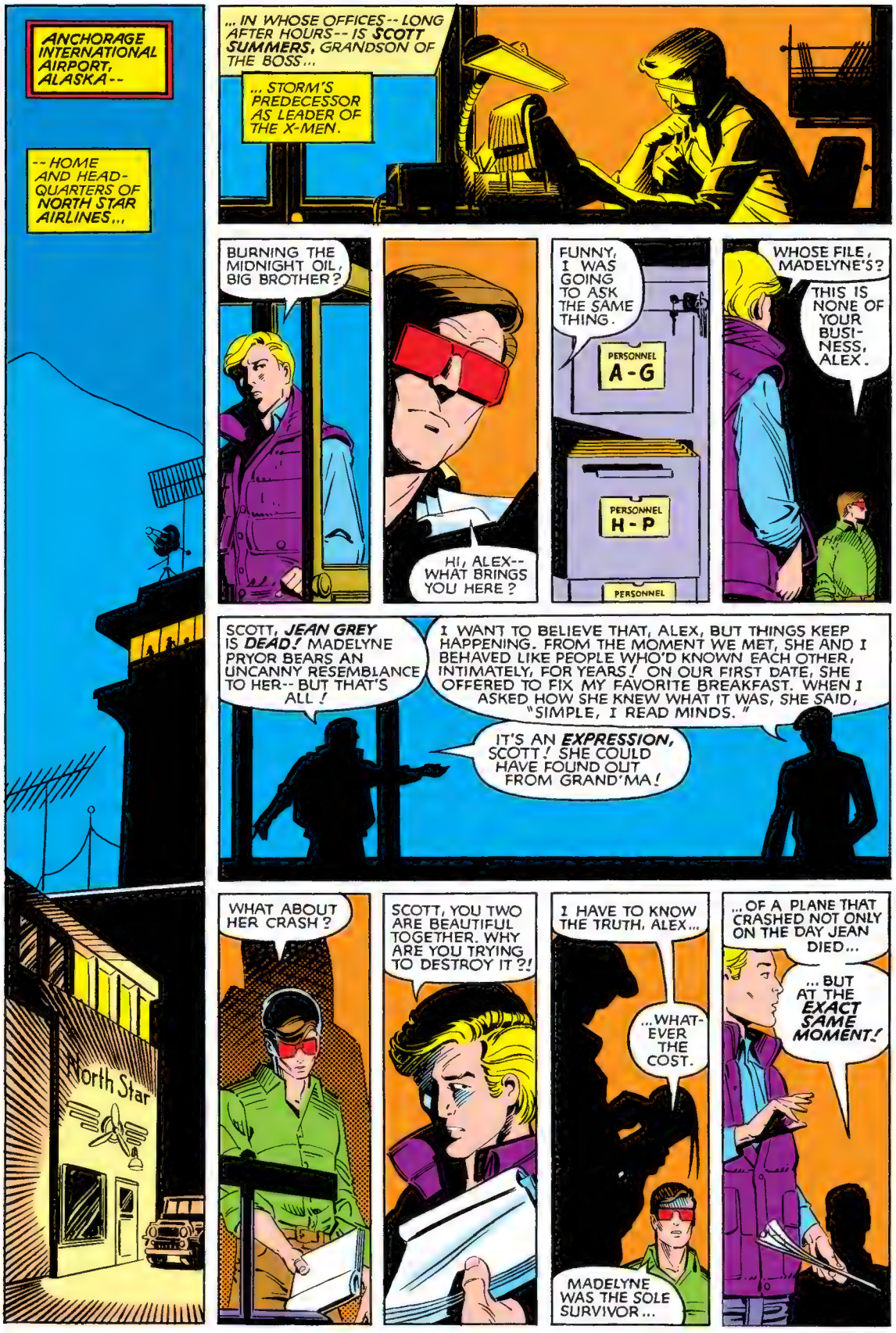


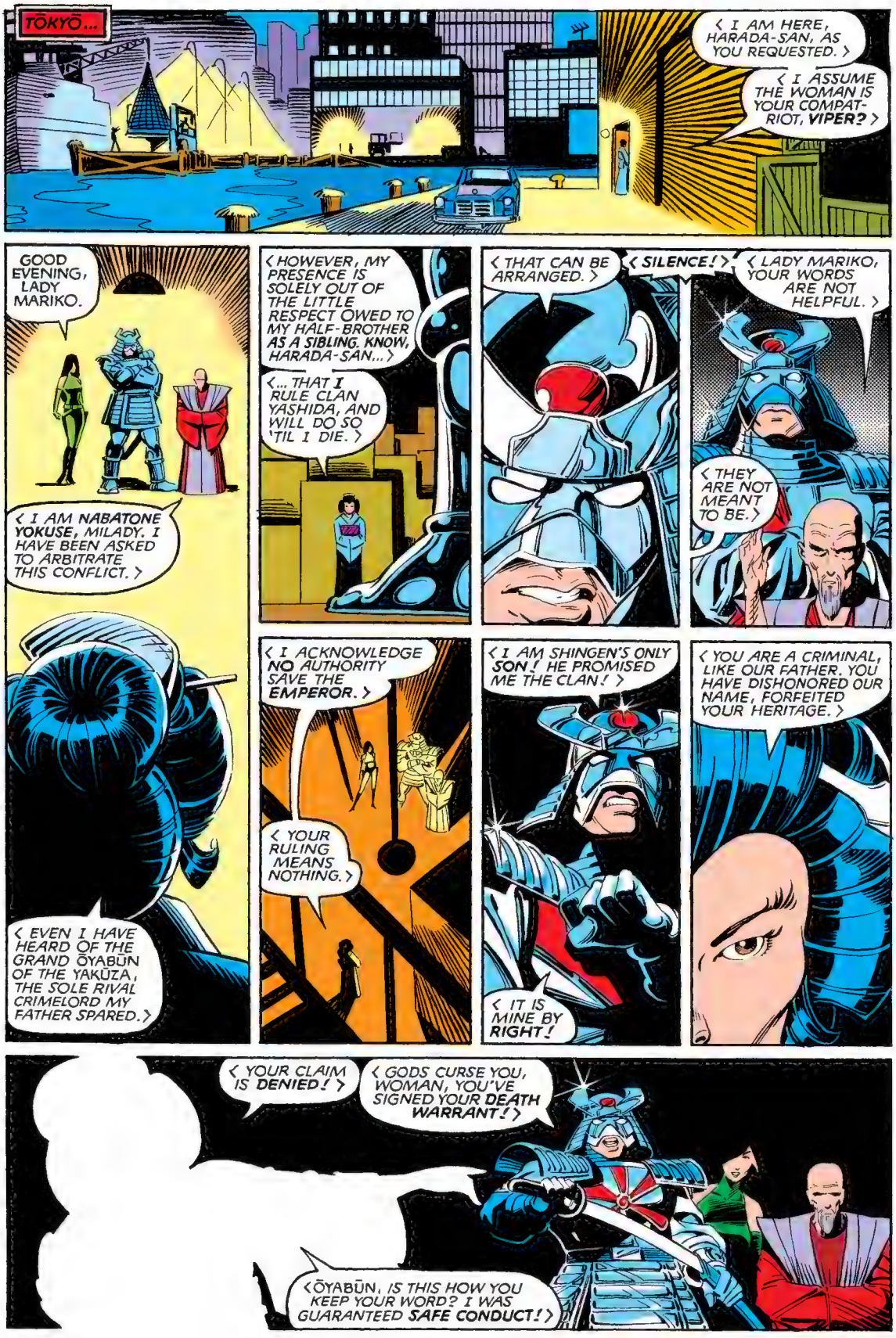


TONI-- M'IKO'S MAID --TELLS ME MARIKO'S GONE TO BED. I WISH I COULD JOIN HER, BUT THE X-MEN AN' I HAVE TOO MUCH TO TALK ABOUT.
I SEND TONI T' THE KITCHEN FOR MORE EATS. JET LAG EVIDENTLY HASN'T AFFECTED ANY-ONE'S APPETITE.
KRAK!
BLESS YOU, LADY MARIKO...
... FOR THE NOBLE FOOL YOU ARE.
BEFORE THIS NIGHT IS OUT, MY CHAMPION, THE SILVER SAMURAI, WILL HAVE EITHER YOUR ABDICATION OR YOUR HEAD. AND ONCE I AM THROUGH HERE...
...THE X-MEN WILL BE IN NO CONDITION TO SAVE-- OR AVENGE-- YOU.
SOMEONE ELSE ON THE HOUSEHOLD STAFF DOES THE SERVING. I DON'T KNOW HER, BUT THAT'S NO SURPRISE-- I HAVE YET T' MEET MOST O' THE PEOPLE WHO WORK FOR M'IKO'S FAMILY.
THERE'S LIGHTNING-- THE GROWL OF THUNDER-- OVER TOKYO BAY, AN' I WONDER IF THAT'S ORORO'S DOING. BEING AN ELEMENTAL, WEATHER AROUND HER TENDS TO MIMIC HER EMOTIONAL STATE. USUALLY, THOUGH, AS A RESULT, SHE HOLDS HERSELF ON A TIGHT REIN.
IT'S A LOUSY WAY T'LIVE, BUT SHE NEVER SEEMED T'MIND.
THAT'S CHANGED.

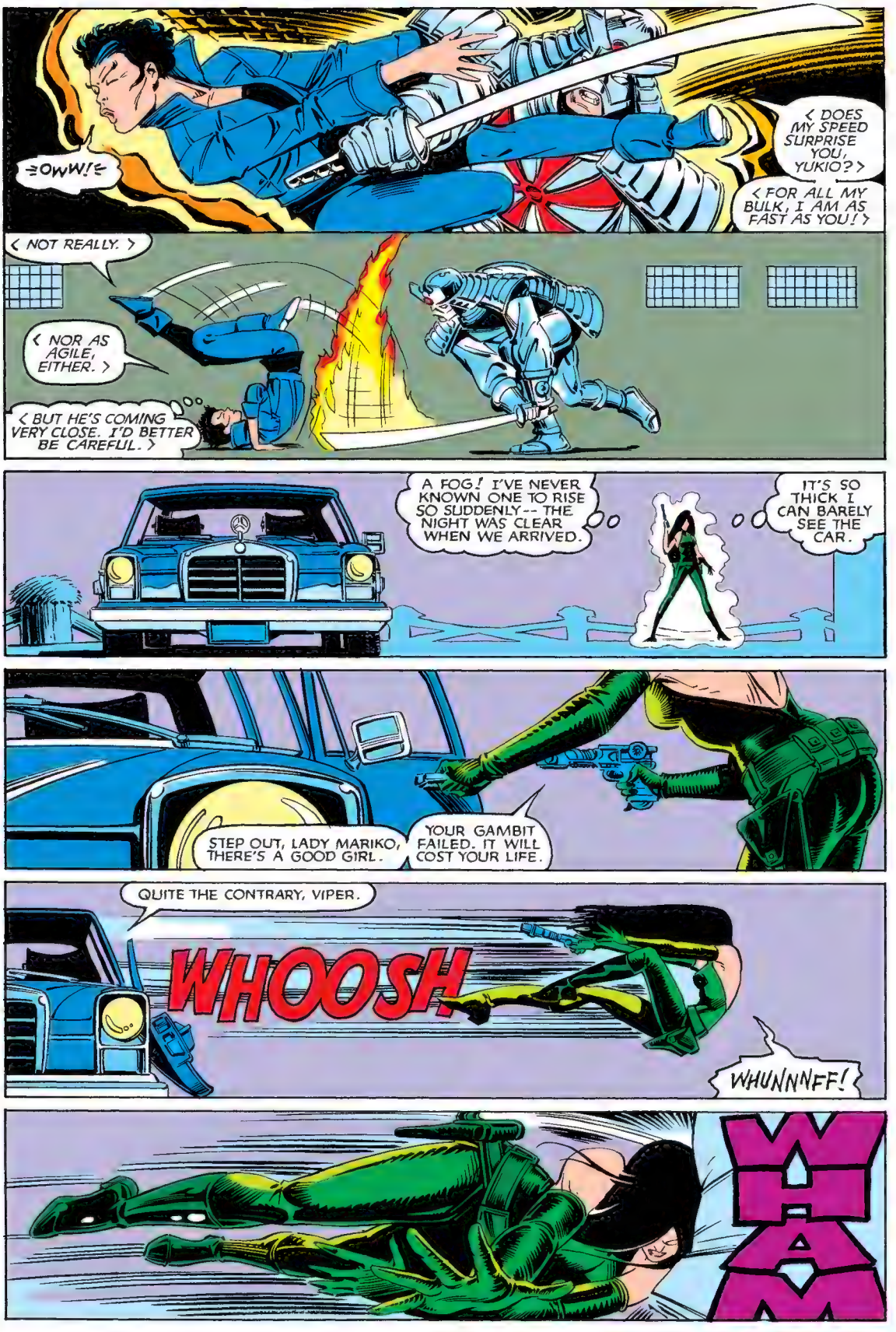
< WILL THERE BE ANYTHING ELSE, LOGAN-SAMA? >
< NO THANK YOU, YOSHI. WE'LL CALL IF WE NEED YOU. >
HAVE SOME TEA, DARLIN'. IT'LL WARM YOU UP.
MANY THANKS, LOGAN.
THESE ARE LOVELY APARTMENTS.
THEY'LL DO.
YOU'RE... DIFFERENT, 'RORO.
SO ARE YOU, MY FRIEND.
THAT F'R SURE. WHATEVER ROAD I FIGURED MY LIFE'D TAKE, I DIDN'T COUNT ON IT LEADIN' HERE.
LOOK AT ME-- A ROUGHNECK CANADIAN MOUNTAIN MAN, ABOUT T'MARRY THE DAUGHTER OF ONE OF THE OLDEST, MOST POWERFUL, MOST RESPECTED FAMILIES IN JAPAN. I STILL DON'T BELIEVE IT'S REALLY HAPPENIN' THIS HAS GOTTA BE A DREAM.
WHY?
BECAUSE PART O' ME DOESN'T THINK IT'S RIGHT.
TO SHAME ME, SHINGEN ASKED ME IF I WAS WORTHY. I GUESS DEEP DOWN INSIDE, I STILL HAVE DOUBTS ABOUT THE ANSWER.
IF MARIKO ACCEPTS YOU, WHAT ELSE MATTERS?
BUT I SENSE DEEPER CONCERN, LOGAN.
YAH! THE CLAN'S INVOLVEMENT IN CRIMINAL AFFAIRS-- THANKS TO SHINGEN-- IS FAR MORE EXTENSIVE THAN MARIKO SUSPECTS. THOSE TIES WON'T BE EASY TO SEVER.
I WANTED CARTE BLANCHE TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM, BUT M'IKO SAID NO. SHE'S GOT COURAGE, 'RORO, AN' MORE SMARTS 'N ME, BUT SHE'S OUT OF HER DEPTH. I'M SCARED SHE'LL BE CORRUPTED, SHAPED BY CIRCUMSTANCE INTO HER FATHER'S IMAGE. I'VE SEEN IT HAPPEN BEFORE.
I FEEL SO FLAMIN' HELPLESS! THIS KIND'A SCRAP'S TOO SUBTLE F'R ME, I DON'T KNOW HOW TO HANDLE IT.

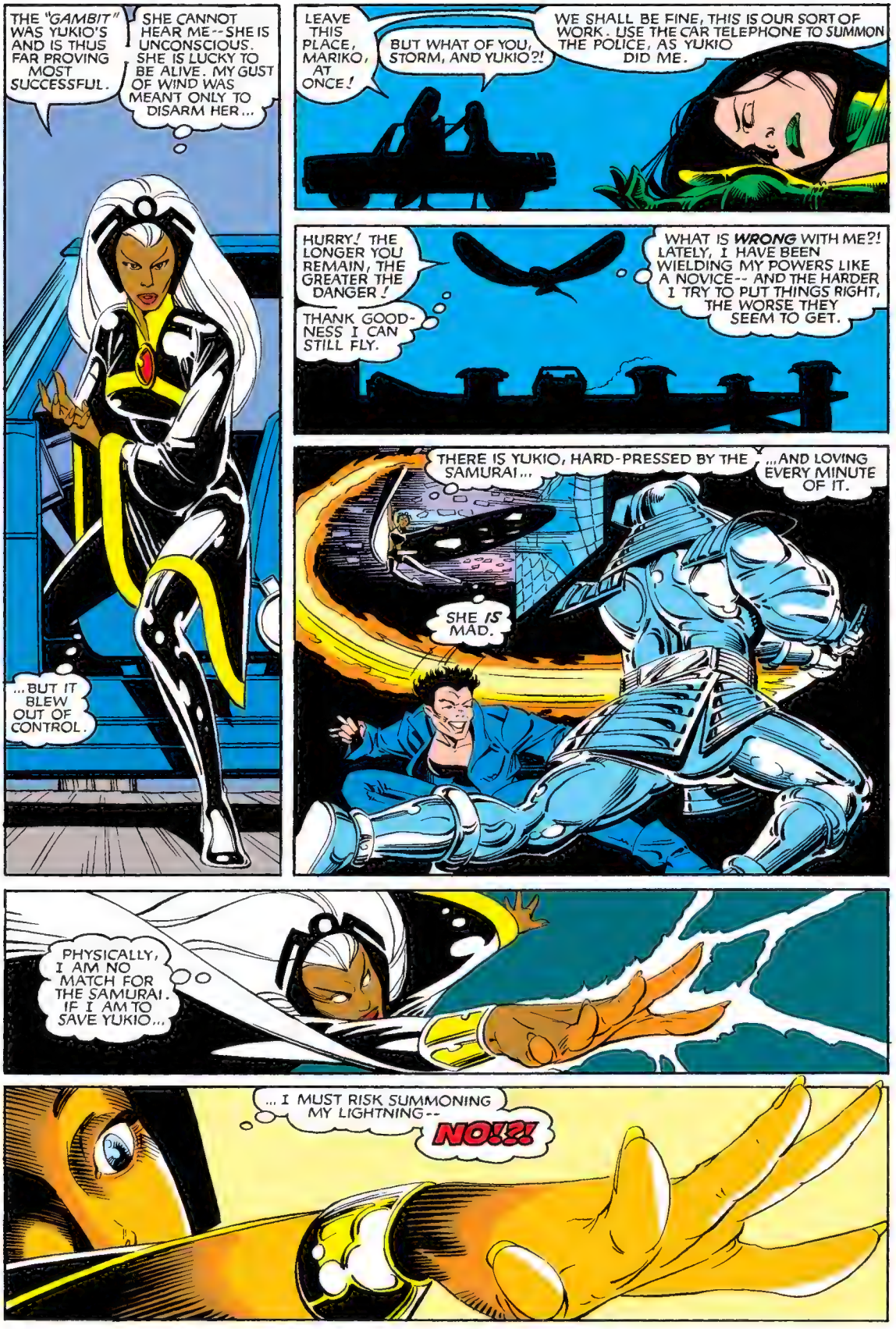

I THINK YOU UNDER-ESTIMATE YOUR LADY.
I HOPE SO-- hmnh ?!
STRANGE--THE TEA SHOULDN'T HAVE THAT AFTERTASTE-- SO FAINT I BARELY NOTICED.
I WISH MY OWN CONFLICT WERE AS CLEAR-CUT...
STORM-- DON'T DRINK!
WHAT--?!?
Poison.
BLESSED GODDESS-- NO!
< HERE'S YOUR CAR, LADY MARIKO, AS YOU REQUESTED. >
< THANK YOU, MATSUO-SAN. >
< TAKE ME TO THIS ADDRESS, PLEASE. >
< IT'S ON THE WATERFRONT, A WAREHOUSE. >
< WAIT THERE FOR ME. >
< CERTAINLY, MILADY, ANYTHING YOU SAY. >
< GOTCHA! >

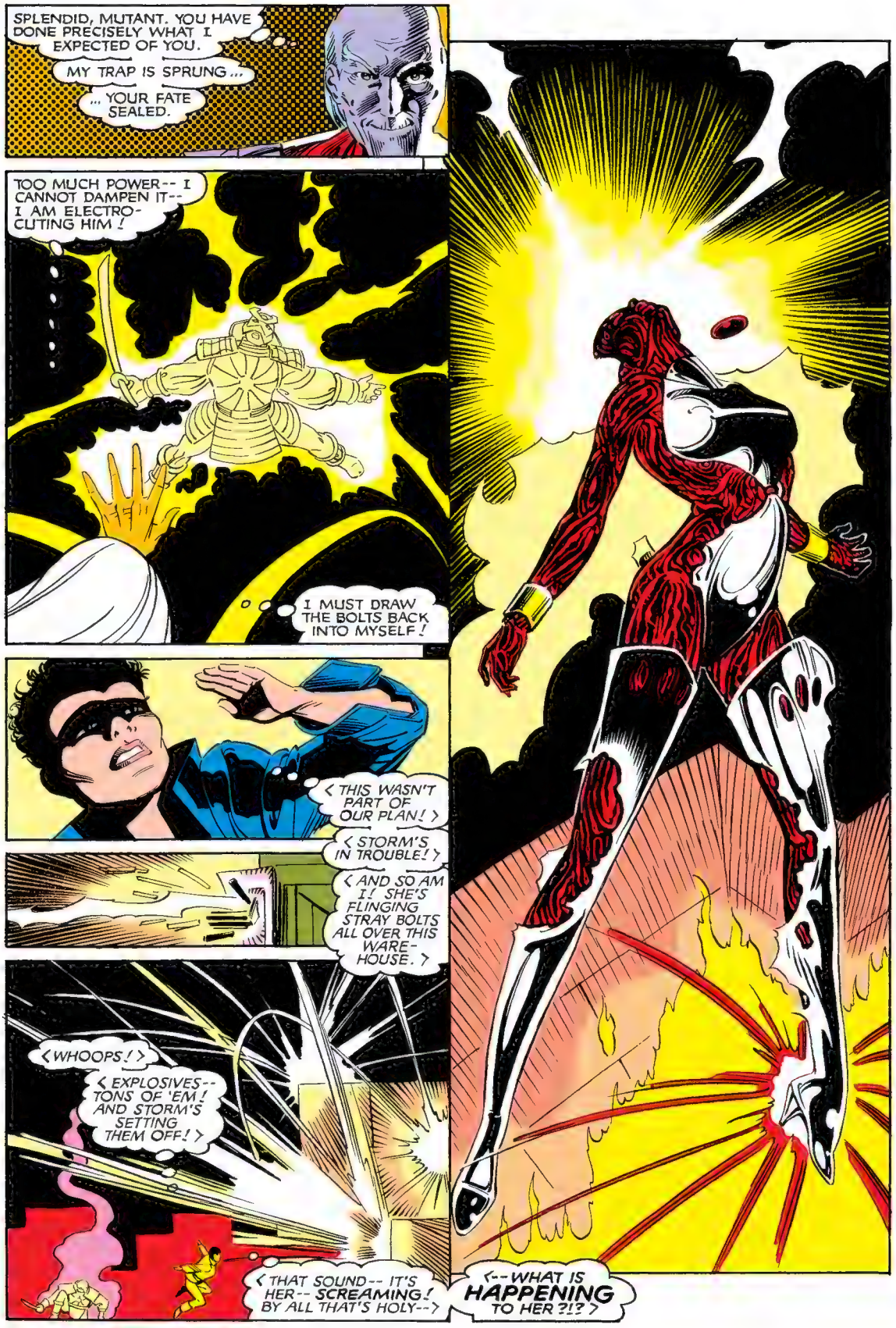

ANCHORAGE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, ALASKA--
-- HOME AND HEAD-QUARTERS OF NORTH STAR AIRLINES...
North Star
... IN WHOSE OFFICES -- LONG AFTER HOURS -- IS SCOTT SUMMERS, GRANDSON OF THE BOSS...
... STORM'S PREDECESSOR AS LEADER OF THE X-MEN.
BURNING THE MIDNIGHT OIL, BIG BROTHER?
HI, ALEX -- WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?
FUNNY, I WAS GOING TO ASK THE SAME THING.
PERSONNEL A-G
PERSONNEL H-P
PERSONNEL
WHOSE FILE, MADELYNE'S?
THIS IS NONE OF YOUR BUSI-NESS, ALEX.
SCOTT, JEAN GREY IS DEAD! MADELYNE PRYOR BEARS AN UNCANNY RESEMBLANCE TO HER -- BUT THAT'S ALL!
I WANT TO BELIEVE THAT, ALEX, BUT THINGS KEEP HAPPENING. FROM THE MOMENT WE MET, SHE AND I BEHAVED LIKE PEOPLE WHO'D KNOWN EACH OTHER, INTIMATELY, FOR YEARS! ON OUR FIRST DATE, SHE OFFERED TO FIX MY FAVORITE BREAKFAST. WHEN I ASKED HOW SHE KNEW WHAT IT WAS, SHE SAID, "SIMPLE, I READ MINDS."
IT'S AN EXPRESSION, SCOTT! SHE COULD HAVE FOUND OUT FROM GRAND'MA!
WHAT ABOUT HER CRASH?
SCOTT, YOU TWO ARE BEAUTIFUL TOGETHER. WHY ARE YOU TRYING TO DESTROY IT?!
I HAVE TO KNOW THE TRUTH, ALEX...
...WHAT-EVER THE COST.
MADELYNE WAS THE SOLE SURVIVOR...
... OF A PLANE THAT CRASHED NOT ONLY ON THE DAY JEAN DIED...
... BUT AT THE EXACT SAME MOMENT!

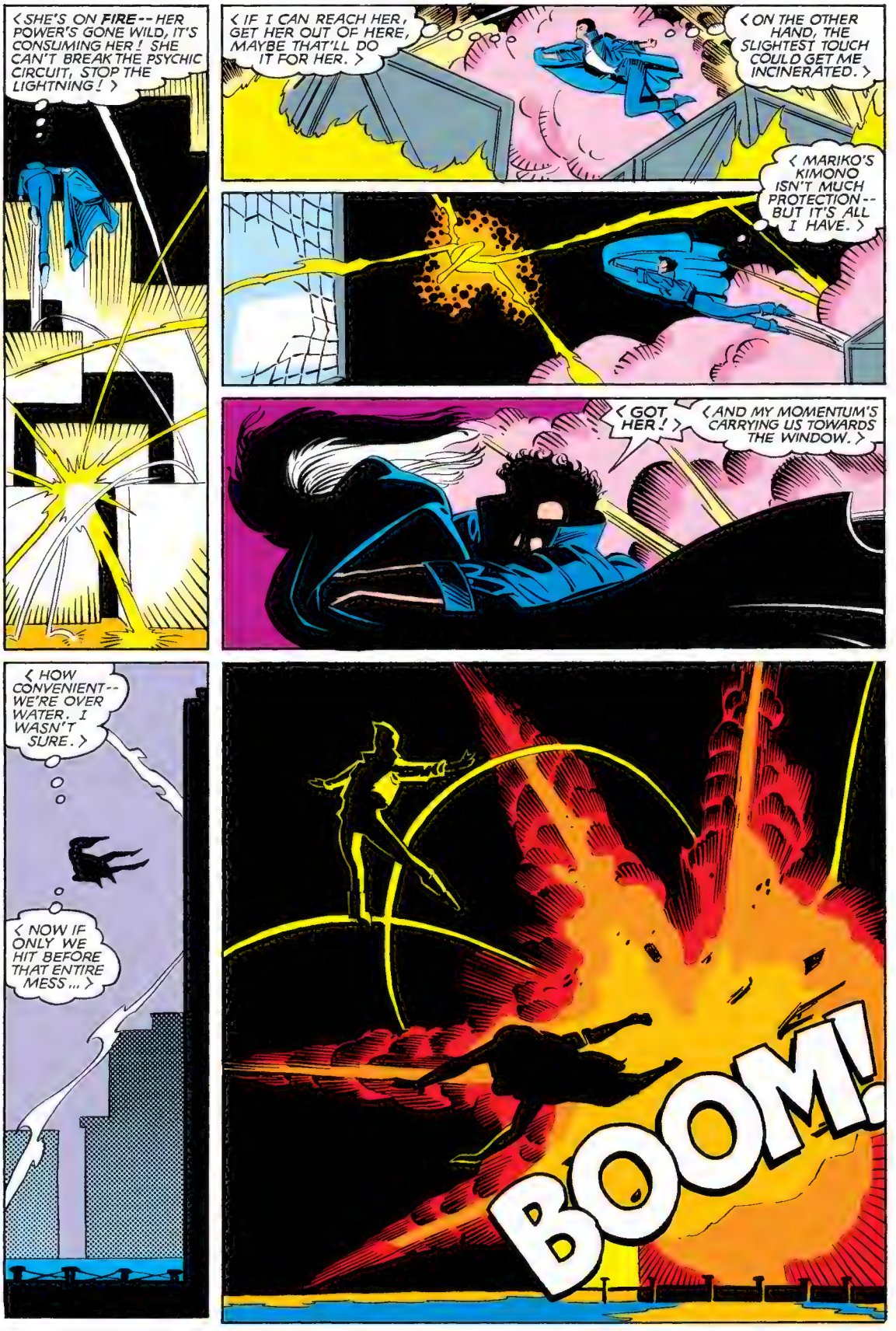

TŌKYŌ...
〈 I AM HERE, HARADA-SAN, AS YOU REQUESTED. 〉
〈 I ASSUME THE WOMAN IS YOUR COMPATRIOT, VIPER? 〉
GOOD EVENING, LADY MARIKO.
〈 I AM NABATONE YOKUSE, MILADY. I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO ARBITRATE THIS CONFLICT. 〉
〈 EVEN I HAVE HEARD OF THE GRAND ŌYABUN OF THE YAKUZA, THE SOLE RIVAL CRIMELORD MY FATHER SPARED. 〉
〈 HOWEVER, MY PRESENCE IS SOLELY OUT OF THE LITTLE RESPECT OWED TO MY HALF-BROTHER AS A SIBLING. KNOW, HARADA-SAN... 〉
〈 ... THAT I RULE CLAN YASHIDA, AND WILL DO SO 'TIL I DIE. 〉
〈 I ACKNOWLEDGE NO AUTHORITY SAVE THE EMPEROR. 〉
〈 YOUR RULING MEANS NOTHING. 〉
〈 THAT CAN BE ARRANGED. 〉
〈 SILENCE! 〉
〈 I AM SHINGEN'S ONLY SON! HE PROMISED ME THE CLAN! 〉
〈 IT IS MINE BY RIGHT! 〉
〈 LADY MARIKO, YOUR WORDS ARE NOT HELPFUL. 〉
〈 THEY ARE NOT MEANT TO BE. 〉
〈 YOU ARE A CRIMINAL, LIKE OUR FATHER. YOU HAVE DISHONORED OUR NAME, FORFEITED YOUR HERITAGE. 〉
〈 YOUR CLAIM IS DENIED! 〉
〈 GODS CURSE YOU, WOMAN, YOU'VE SIGNED YOUR DEATH WARRANT! 〉
〈 ŌYABUN, IS THIS HOW YOU KEEP YOUR WORD? I WAS GUARANTEED SAFE CONDUCT! 〉

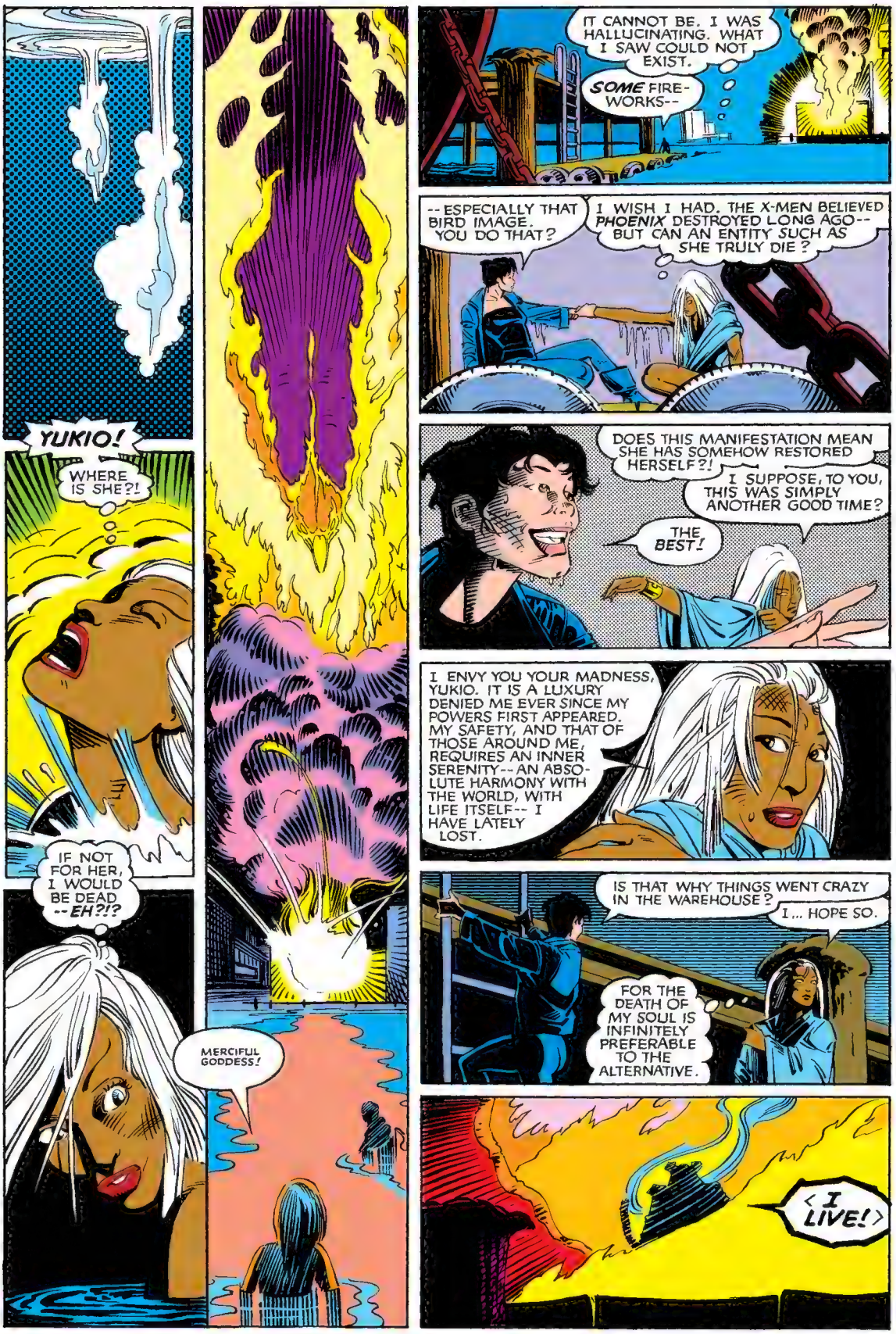
< I MADE MY PLEDGE TO LADY MARIKO. >
< YOU ARE NOT SHE. >
< WHAT--?! >
WHO DARES!?!
< HOW QUICKLY SOME FORGET. >
< WE HAVE UNFINISHED BUSINESS, SAMURAI. >
I FOLLOWED THE LIMOUSINE ALL THE WAY HERE. SINCE IT NEVER STOPPED EN ROUTE, MARIKO MUST STILL BE INSIDE, OR NEARBY.
KTANG!
DEAL WITH HER, VIPER.
THE WILD ONE IS MINE!
< THAT, RENEGADE, IS A MATTER OF OPINION. >
< VIPER DISAPPEARED! SHE MUST BE USING THE SAME TELEPORT DEVICE THE SAMURAI USED TO ESCAPE WOLVERINE AND ME EARLIER THIS EVENING! >

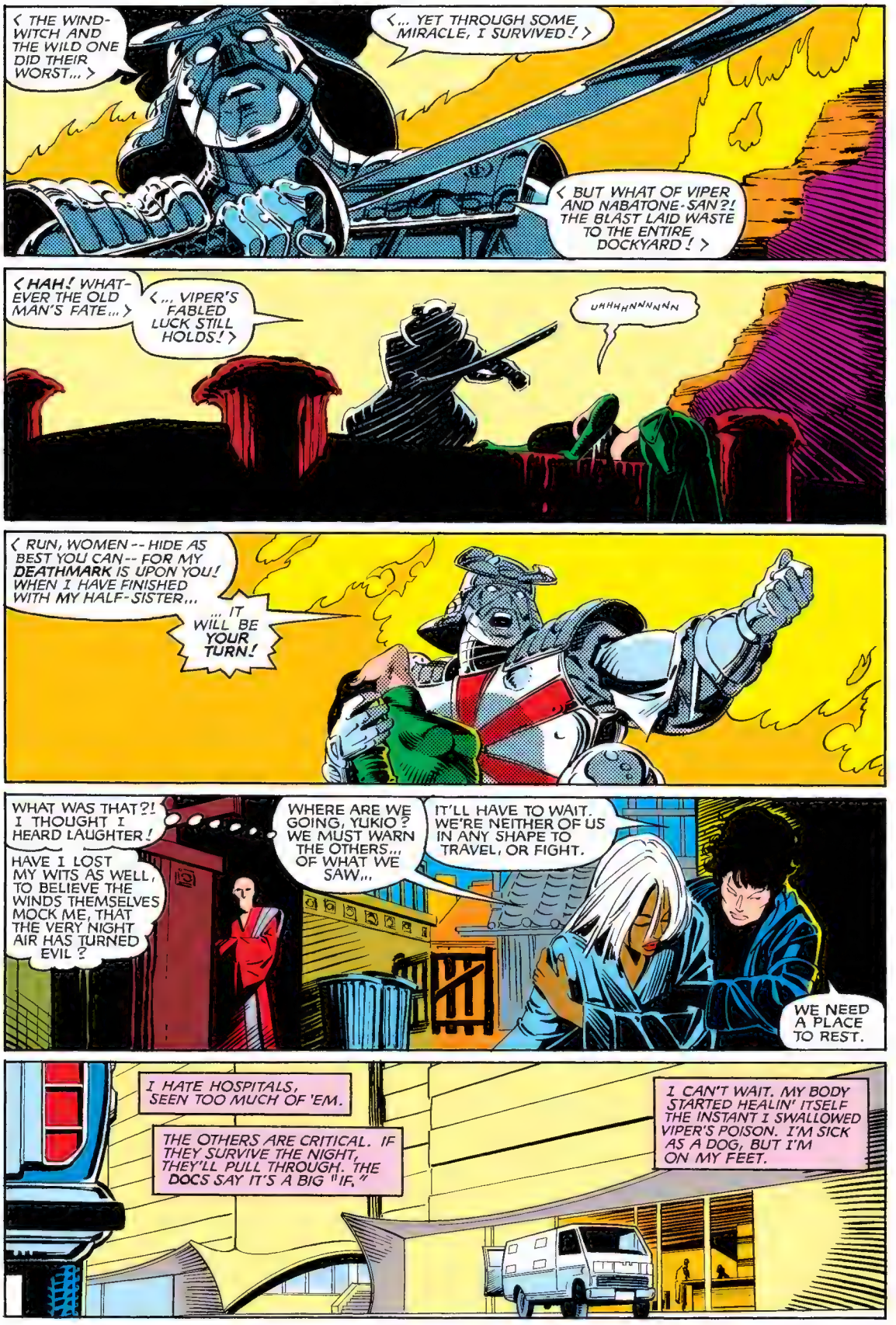

=OWW!=
< DOES MY SPEED SURPRISE YOU, YUKIO? >
< FOR ALL MY BULK, I AM AS FAST AS YOU! >
< NOT REALLY. >
< NOR AS AGILE, EITHER. >
< BUT HE'S COMING VERY CLOSE. I'D BETTER BE CAREFUL. >
A FOG! I'VE NEVER KNOWN ONE TO RISE SO SUDDENLY-- THE NIGHT WAS CLEAR WHEN WE ARRIVED.
IT'S SO THICK I CAN BARELY SEE THE CAR.
STEP OUT, LADY MARIKO, THERE'S A GOOD GIRL.
YOUR GAMBIT FAILED. IT WILL COST YOUR LIFE.
QUITE THE CONTRARY, VIPER.
WHOOSH
WHUNNNFF!
WHAM

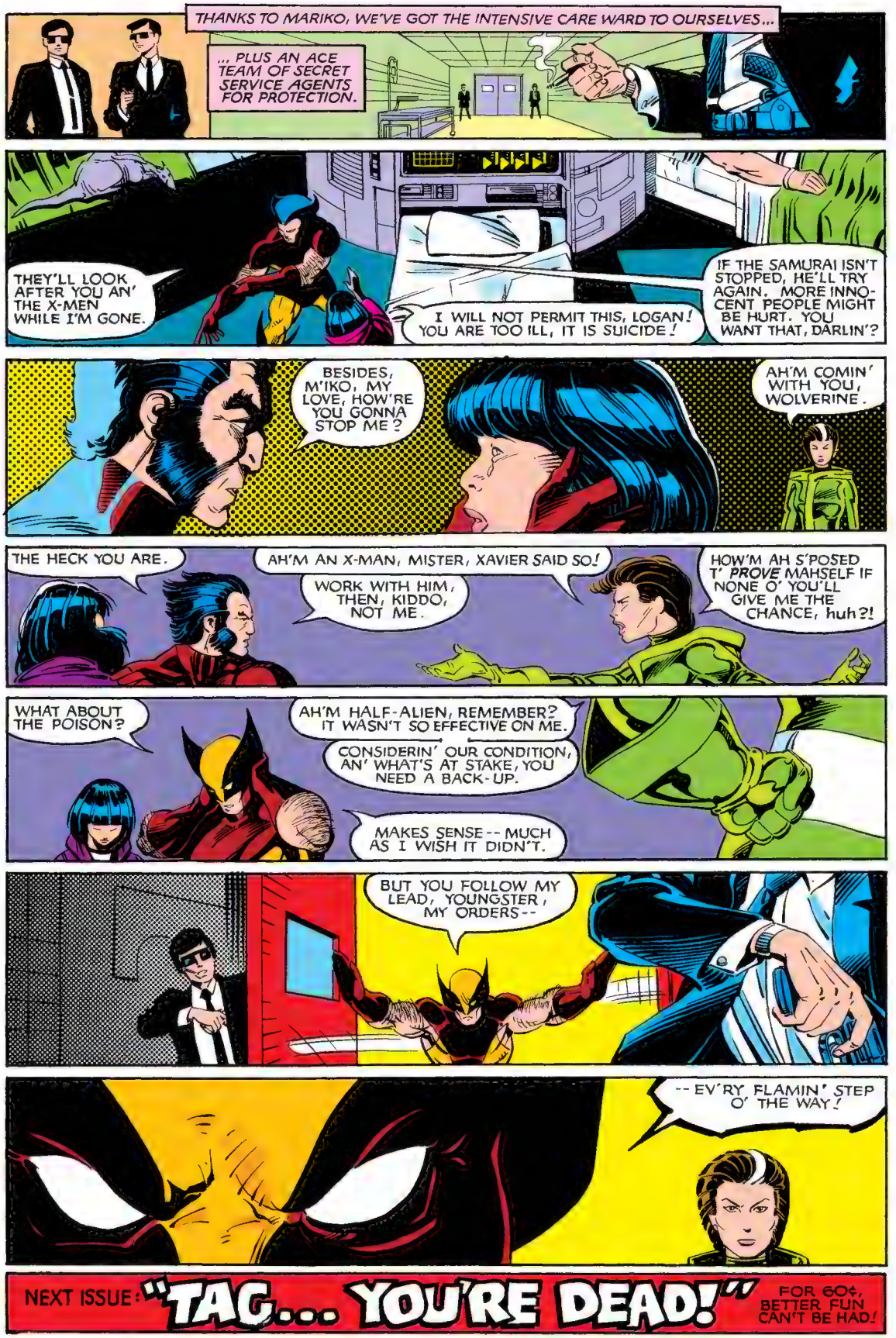

THE "GAMBIT" WAS YUKIO'S AND IS THUS FAR PROVING MOST SUCCESSFUL.
SHE CANNOT HEAR ME--SHE IS UNCONSCIOUS. SHE IS LUCKY TO BE ALIVE. MY GUST OF WIND WAS MEANT ONLY TO DISARM HER...
...BUT IT BLEW OUT OF CONTROL.
LEAVE THIS PLACE, MARIKO, AT ONCE!
BUT WHAT OF YOU, STORM, AND YUKIO?!
WE SHALL BE FINE, THIS IS OUR SORT OF WORK. USE THE CAR TELEPHONE TO SUMMON THE POLICE, AS YUKIO DID ME.
HURRY! THE LONGER YOU REMAIN, THE GREATER THE DANGER!
THANK GOODNESS I CAN STILL FLY.
WHAT IS WRONG WITH ME?! LATELY, I HAVE BEEN WIELDING MY POWERS LIKE A NOVICE-- AND THE HARDER I TRY TO PUT THINGS RIGHT, THE WORSE THEY SEEM TO GET.
THERE IS YUKIO, HARD-PRESSED BY THE SAMURAI...
...AND LOVING EVERY MINUTE OF IT.
SHE IS MAD.
PHYSICALLY, I AM NO MATCH FOR THE SAMURAI. IF I AM TO SAVE YUKIO...
...I MUST RISK SUMMONING MY LIGHTNING--
NO!?!

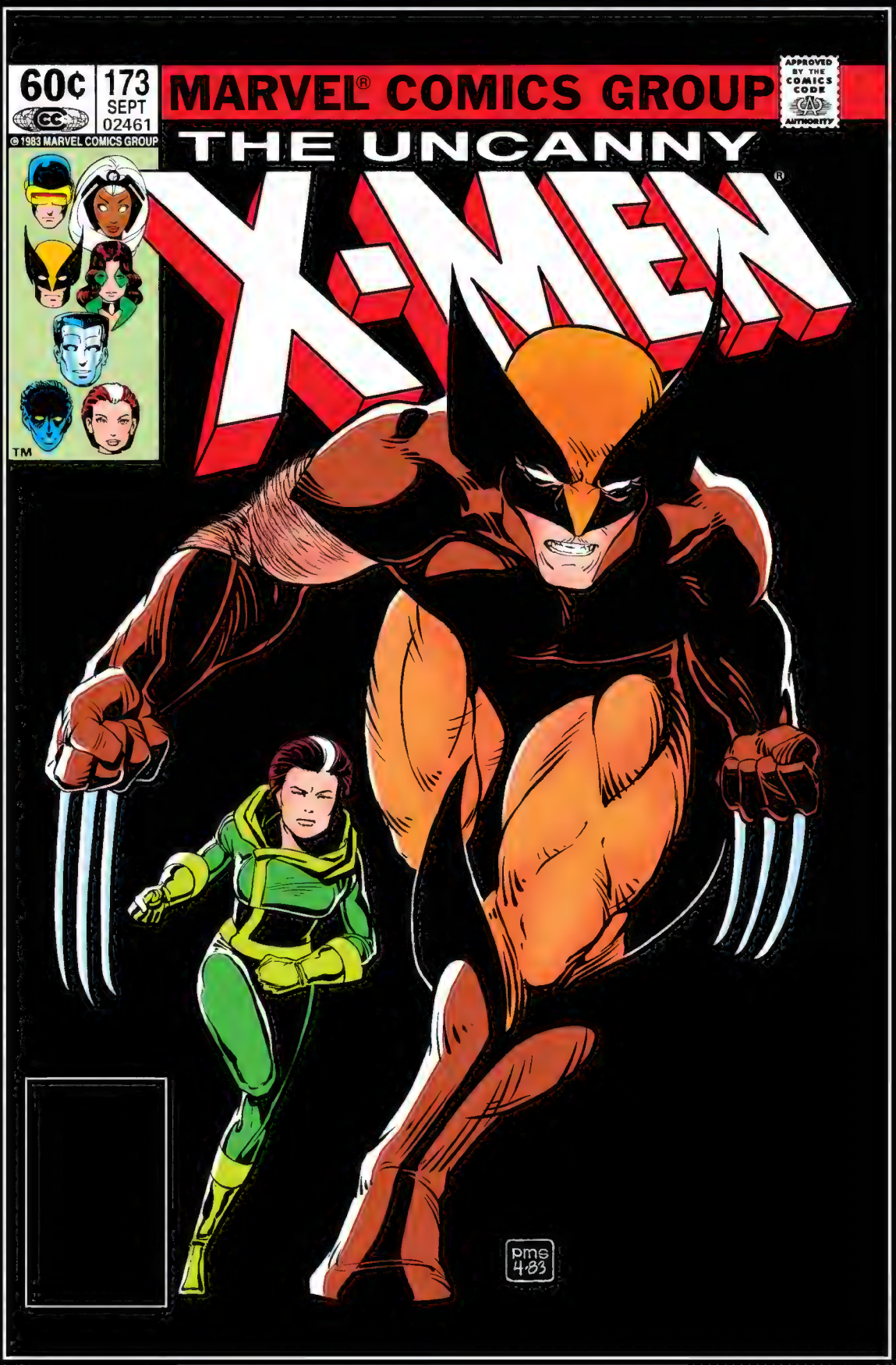

SPLENDID, MUTANT. YOU HAVE DONE PRECISELY WHAT I EXPECTED OF YOU.
MY TRAP IS SPRUNG...
...YOUR FATE SEALED.
TOO MUCH POWER-- I CANNOT DAMPEN IT-- I AM ELECTRO-CUTING HIM!
I MUST DRAW THE BOLTS BACK INTO MYSELF!
<THIS WASN'T PART OF OUR PLAN!>
<STORM'S IN TROUBLE!>
<AND SO AM I! SHE'S FLINGING STRAY BOLTS ALL OVER THIS WARE-HOUSE.>
<WHOOPS!>
<EXPLOSIVES-- TONS OF 'EM! AND STORM'S SETTING THEM OFF!>
<THAT SOUND-- IT'S HER-- SCREAMING! BY ALL THAT'S HOLY-->
<--WHAT IS HAPPENING TO HER?!?>


< SHE'S ON FIRE -- HER POWER'S GONE WILD, IT'S CONSUMING HER ! SHE CAN'T BREAK THE PSYCHIC CIRCUIT, STOP THE LIGHTNING ! >
< IF I CAN REACH HER, GET HER OUT OF HERE, MAYBE THAT'LL DO IT FOR HER. >
< ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SLIGHTEST TOUCH COULD GET ME INCINERATED. >
< MARIKO'S KIMONO ISN'T MUCH PROTECTION -- BUT IT'S ALL I HAVE. >
< GOT HER ! >
< AND MY MOMENTUM'S CARRYING US TOWARDS THE WINDOW. >
< HOW CONVENIENT -- WE'RE OVER WATER. I WASN'T SURE. >
< NOW IF ONLY WE HIT BEFORE THAT ENTIRE MESS ... >
BOOM!


YUKIO!
WHERE IS SHE?!
IF NOT FOR HER, I WOULD BE DEAD --EH?!?
MERCIFUL GODDESS!
IT CANNOT BE. I WAS HALLUCINATING. WHAT I SAW COULD NOT EXIST.
SOME FIRE-WORKS--
--ESPECIALLY THAT BIRD IMAGE. YOU DO THAT?
I WISH I HAD. THE X-MEN BELIEVED PHOENIX DESTROYED LONG AGO-- BUT CAN AN ENTITY SUCH AS SHE TRULY DIE?
DOES THIS MANIFESTATION MEAN SHE HAS SOMEHOW RESTORED HERSELF?!
I SUPPOSE, TO YOU, THIS WAS SIMPLY ANOTHER GOOD TIME?
THE BEST!
I ENVY YOU YOUR MADNESS, YUKIO. IT IS A LUXURY DENIED ME EVER SINCE MY POWERS FIRST APPEARED. MY SAFETY, AND THAT OF THOSE AROUND ME, REQUIRES AN INNER SERENITY--AN ABSOLUTE HARMONY WITH THE WORLD, WITH LIFE ITSELF-- I HAVE LATELY LOST.
IS THAT WHY THINGS WENT CRAZY IN THE WAREHOUSE?
I... HOPE SO.
FOR THE DEATH OF MY SOUL IS INFINITELY PREFERABLE TO THE ALTERNATIVE.
<I LIVE!>
I LIVE!


< THE WIND-WITCH AND THE WILD ONE DID THEIR WORST... >
< ... YET THROUGH SOME MIRACLE, I SURVIVED! >
< BUT WHAT OF VIPER AND NABATONE-SAN?! THE BLAST LAID WASTE TO THE ENTIRE DOCKYARD! >
< HAH! WHATEVER THE OLD MAN'S FATE... >
< ... VIPER'S FABLED LUCK STILL HOLDS! >
UHHHHNNNNNN
< RUN, WOMEN -- HIDE AS BEST YOU CAN -- FOR MY DEATHMARK IS UPON YOU! WHEN I HAVE FINISHED WITH MY HALF-SISTER...
... IT WILL BE YOUR TURN!
WHAT WAS THAT?! I THOUGHT I HEARD LAUGHTER!
HAVE I LOST MY WITS AS WELL, TO BELIEVE THE WINDS THEMSELVES MOCK ME, THAT THE VERY NIGHT AIR HAS TURNED EVIL ?
WHERE ARE WE GOING, YUKIO? WE MUST WARN THE OTHERS... OF WHAT WE SAW...
IT'LL HAVE TO WAIT. WE'RE NEITHER OF US IN ANY SHAPE TO TRAVEL, OR FIGHT.
WE NEED A PLACE TO REST.
I HATE HOSPITALS, SEEN TOO MUCH OF 'EM.
THE OTHERS ARE CRITICAL. IF THEY SURVIVE THE NIGHT, THEY'LL PULL THROUGH. THE DOCS SAY IT'S A BIG "IF."
I CAN'T WAIT. MY BODY STARTED HEALIN' ITSELF THE INSTANT I SWALLOWED VIPER'S POISON. I'M SICK AS A DOG, BUT I'M ON MY FEET.


THANKS TO MARIKO, WE'VE GOT THE INTENSIVE CARE WARD TO OURSELVES...
... PLUS AN ACE TEAM OF SECRET SERVICE AGENTS FOR PROTECTION.
THEY'LL LOOK AFTER YOU AN' THE X-MEN WHILE I'M GONE.
I WILL NOT PERMIT THIS, LOGAN! YOU ARE TOO ILL, IT IS SUICIDE!
IF THE SAMURAI ISN'T STOPPED, HE'LL TRY AGAIN. MORE INNOCENT PEOPLE MIGHT BE HURT. YOU WANT THAT, DARLIN'?
BESIDES, M'IKO, MY LOVE, HOW'RE YOU GONNA STOP ME?
AH'M COMIN' WITH YOU, WOLVERINE.
THE HECK YOU ARE.
AH'M AN X-MAN, MISTER, XAVIER SAID SO!
WORK WITH HIM, THEN, KIDDO, NOT ME.
HOW'M AH S'POSED T' PROVE MAHSELF IF NONE O' YOU'LL GIVE ME THE CHANCE, huh?!
WHAT ABOUT THE POISON?
AH'M HALF-ALIEN, REMEMBER? IT WASN'T SO EFFECTIVE ON ME.
CONSIDERIN' OUR CONDITION, AN' WHAT'S AT STAKE, YOU NEED A BACK-UP.
MAKES SENSE -- MUCH AS I WISH IT DIDN'T.
BUT YOU FOLLOW MY LEAD, YOUNGSTER, MY ORDERS --
-- EV'RY FLAMIN' STEP O' THE WAY!
NEXT ISSUE: "TAG... YOU'RE DEAD!"
FOR 60¢, BETTER FUN CAN'T BE HAD!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Stan Lee
PRESENTS...

"TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT"

STARRING THE X-MEN

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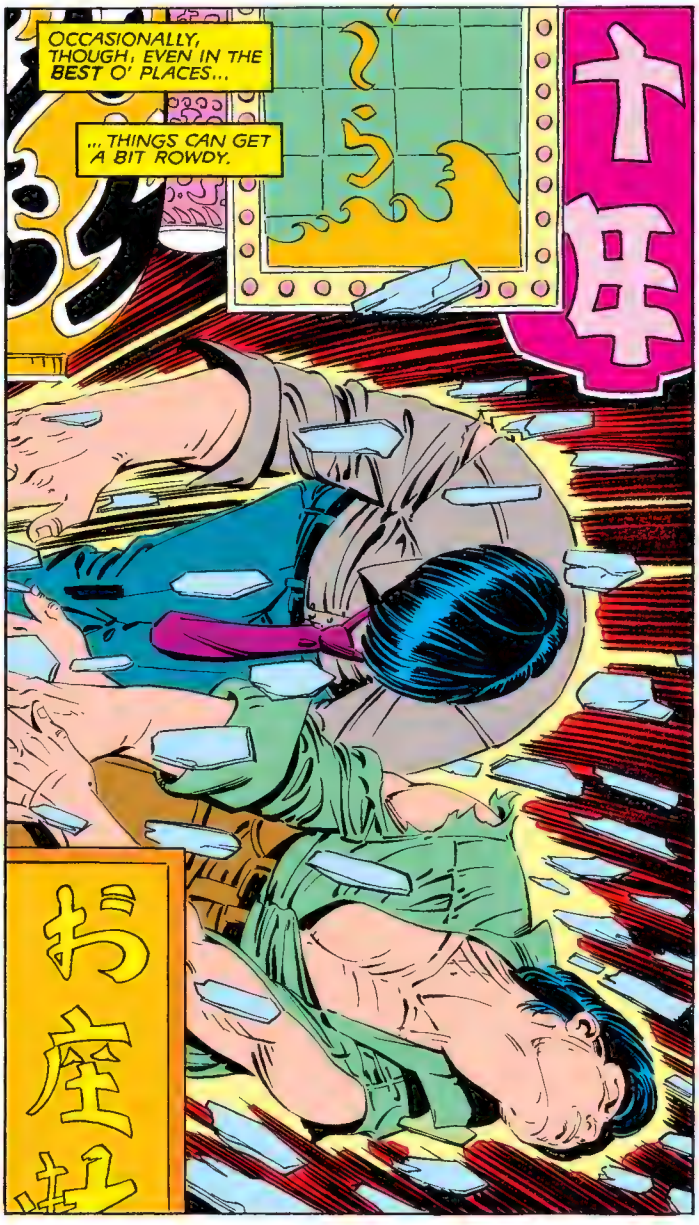


< IT'S ALREADY A LOUSY NIGHT FOR BUSINESS, AKIO. YOU WANT ME TO DO THE SAME FOR YOUR HEALTH?* >

< I WANT INFORMATION. I WON'T ASK AGAIN. >

Y'ALL BETTER COOPERATE, SUGAH. WE BEEN GETTIN' THE RUNAROUND ALL EVENIN' AN' IT'S MAKIN' **WOLVERINE** A WEE BIT **TESTY**.

< I DARE NOT BETRAY MY OATH OF SILENCE. IT WOULD MEAN MY LIFE! >

< IN THAT CASE, BUB, YOU GOT A PROBLEM. >

*TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE -- LOUISE.

AH DO SO ENJOY WATCHIN' A PROFESSIONAL WORK. PLAYIN' YOUR SIDEKICK IS PROVIN' T' BE A REAL EDUCATION, WOLVIE...

...IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE!

THAT, SUH, IS NO WAY T' TREAT A LADY!

URRRGKH!

DON'T DO IT AGAIN.

< YOU'RE OUT OF OPTIONS, AKIO. I WANT THE GRAND OYABUN OF THE YAKUZA: >

<...NABATONE YOKUSE. >

< YOU'LL NEVER REACH HIM, GAIJIN. NABATONE-SAN IS DEFENDED BY A VERITABLE ARMY, THE FINEST MARTIAL ARTISTS IN NIPPON! >

< THAT'S **MY** PROBLEM. >

< YOURS IS MORE IMMEDIATE. >

PUNK'S A SURVIVOR. HE TALKS, FIGURING WHATEVER HAPPENS, HE'LL COME OUT AHEAD.

EITHER I'LL NAIL THE OLD MAN...

...OR VICE VERSA.

WHAT'S OUR NEXT MOVE, WOLVIE?

NABATONE. HE'LL LEAD US TO **VIPER** AN' THE **SILVER SAMURAI**.

AND THEN?

THINGS GET NASTY.

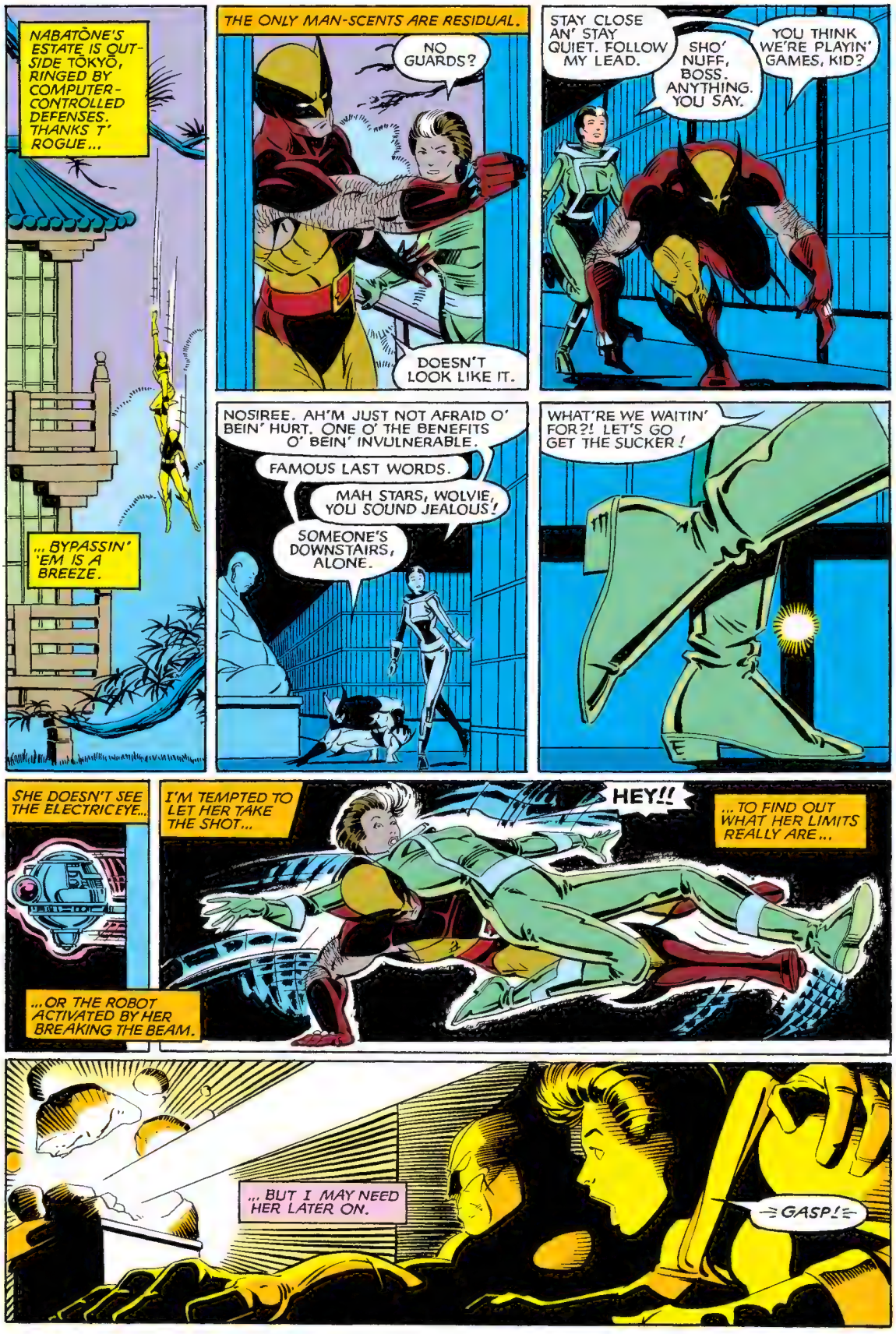
I INVITED THE X-MEN TO JAPAN FOR MY WEDDING. INSTEAD, THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THEY'LL BE ATTENDIN' THEIR OWN **FUNERALS**.

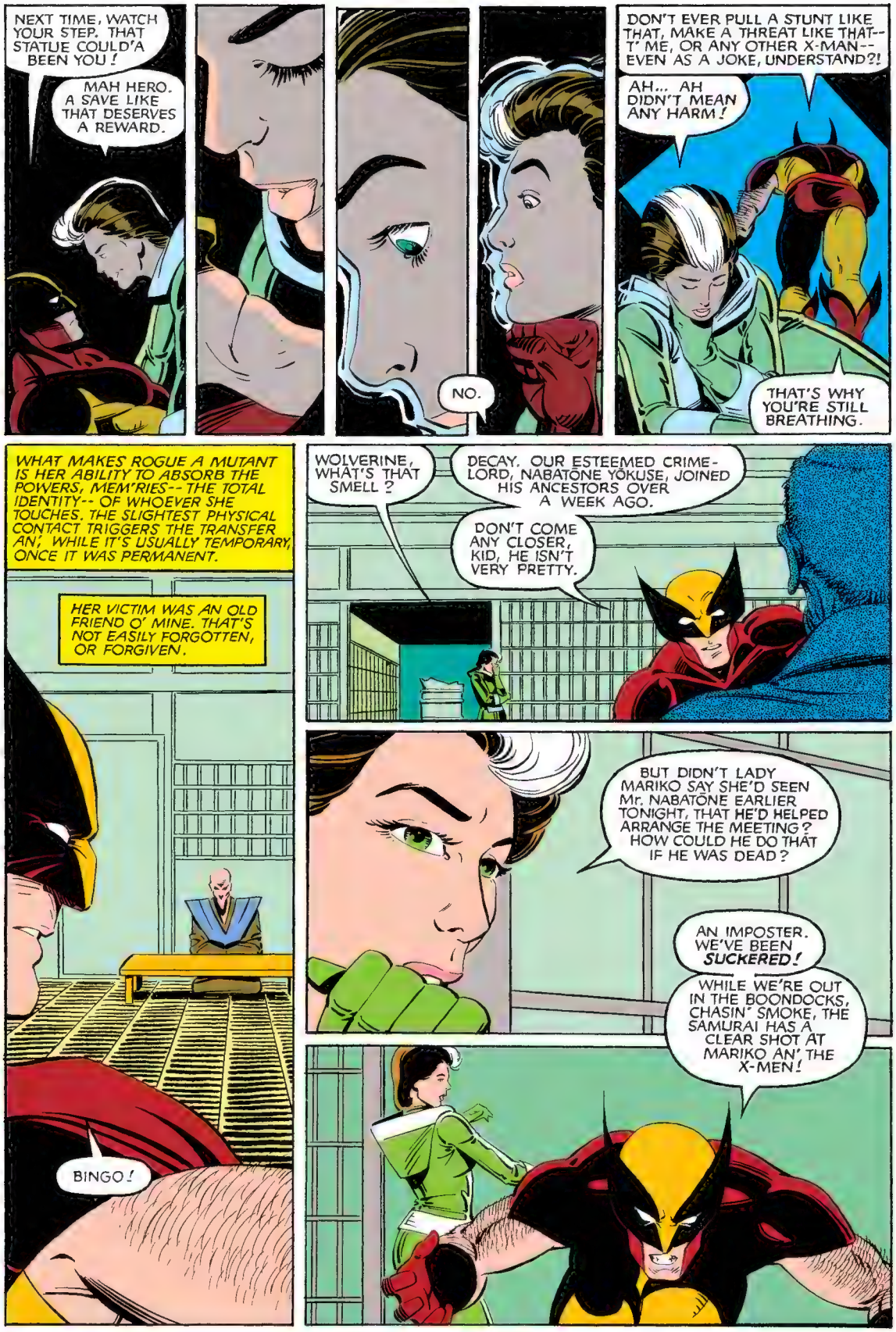
MY FIANCÉE -- **MARIKO YASHIDA'S**-- DAD WAS A CRIME-LORD. HER HALF-BROTHER, THE SILVER SAMURAI, WANTS CONTROL O' THAT EMPIRE. HE MEANS TO GET IT BY **KILLING** HER. TO KEEP ME AN' MY FELLOW MUTANTS OUTTA THE PICTURE, VIPER POISONED ALL OF US 'CEPT FOR **STORM**.

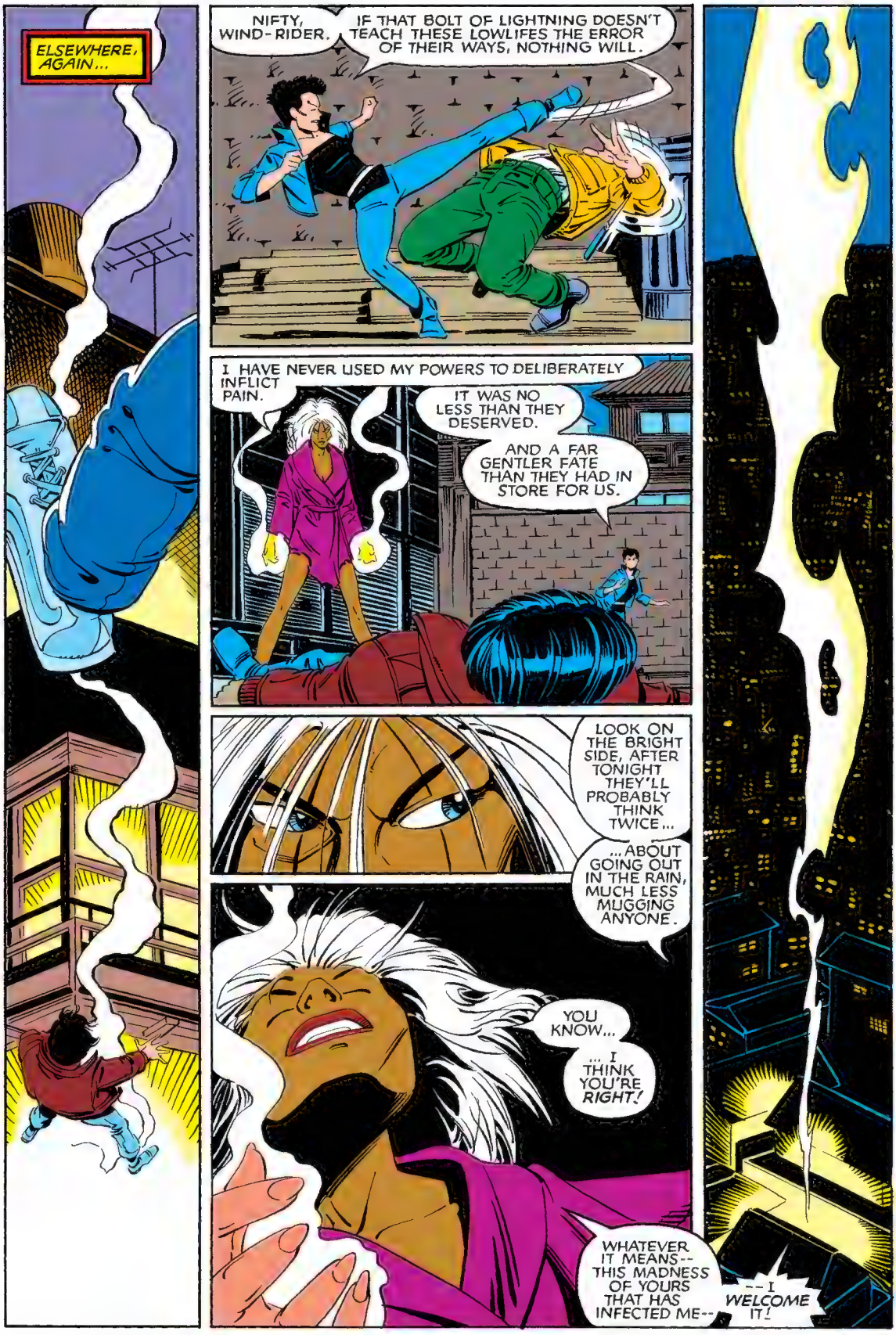
ROGUE AN' I RECOVERED. WE'VE BEEN ON THE SAMURAI'S TRAIL EVER SINCE. THE OTHERS ARE IN THE HOSPITAL, INTENSIVE CARE, CRITICAL CONDITION.

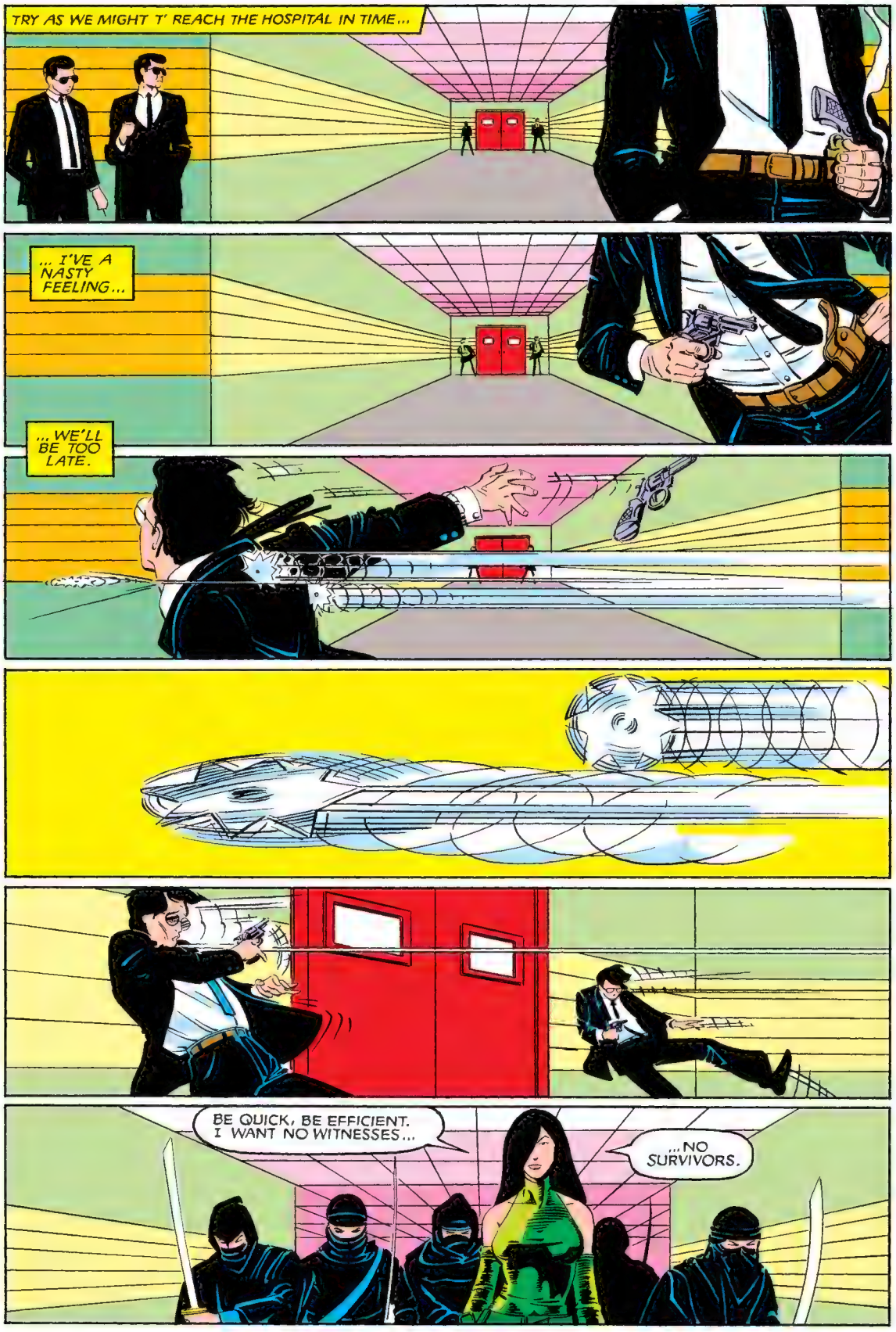
STORM'S **DISAPPEARED**.

ELSEWHERE...
〈 GO AWAY, WILD ONE! 〉
〈 THE WORD'S OUT, ON BOTH OF YOU, FROM THE OYABUN HIMSELF--A DEATHMARK! 〉
〈 FORGIVE ME, YUKIO-SAN. THERE'S NO SANCTUARY FOR YOU, ANYWHERE. 〉
〈 POO! 〉
IT'S A LONG WAY CROSS-TOWN TO THE X-MEN'S HOSPITAL, STORM. YOU UP TO THE TRIP?
I FEAR THAT DECISION...
...HAS JUST BEEN TAKEN OUT OF OUR HANDS.
THREE-TO-ONE ODDS.
HARDLY SEEMS A FAIR FIGHT.
BUT BEGGARS CAN'T BE CHOOSERS.
WE FACE DEATH--AND WORSE--HOW CAN YUKIO BE SO LIGHT-HEARTED AND UNCARING?!
WE ARE TRAPPED IN THIS ALLEY, WE ARE UNARMED, WOUNDED--AND MY CONTROL OVER MY MUTANT ELEMENTAL POWERS IS MARGINAL AT BEST.
Oh, WELL--
--YOU ONLY DIE ONCE.
〈 TAK, IT'S YUKIO! OPEN THE DOOR AND LET US IN! MY FRIEND AND I NEED HELP! 〉


NABATŌNE'S ESTATE IS OUTSIDE TŌKYŌ, RINGED BY COMPUTER-CONTROLLED DEFENSES. THANKS T' ROGUE...
...BYPASSIN' 'EM IS A BREEZE.
THE ONLY MAN-SCENTS ARE RESIDUAL.
NO GUARDS?
DOESN'T LOOK LIKE IT.
STAY CLOSE AN' STAY QUIET. FOLLOW MY LEAD.
SHO' NUFF, BOSS. ANYTHING YOU SAY.
YOU THINK WE'RE PLAYIN' GAMES, KID?
NOSIREE. AH'M JUST NOT AFRAID O' BEIN' HURT. ONE O' THE BENEFITS O' BEIN' INVULNERABLE.
FAMOUS LAST WORDS.
MAH STARS, WOLVIE, YOU SOUND JEALOUS!
SOMEONE'S DOWNSTAIRS, ALONE.
WHAT'RE WE WAITIN' FOR?! LET'S GO GET THE SUCKER!
SHE DOESN'T SEE THE ELECTRIC EYE...
...OR THE ROBOT ACTIVATED BY HER BREAKING THE BEAM.
I'M TEMPTED TO LET HER TAKE THE SHOT...
HEY!!
...TO FIND OUT WHAT HER LIMITS REALLY ARE...
...BUT I MAY NEED HER LATER ON.
=GASP!=

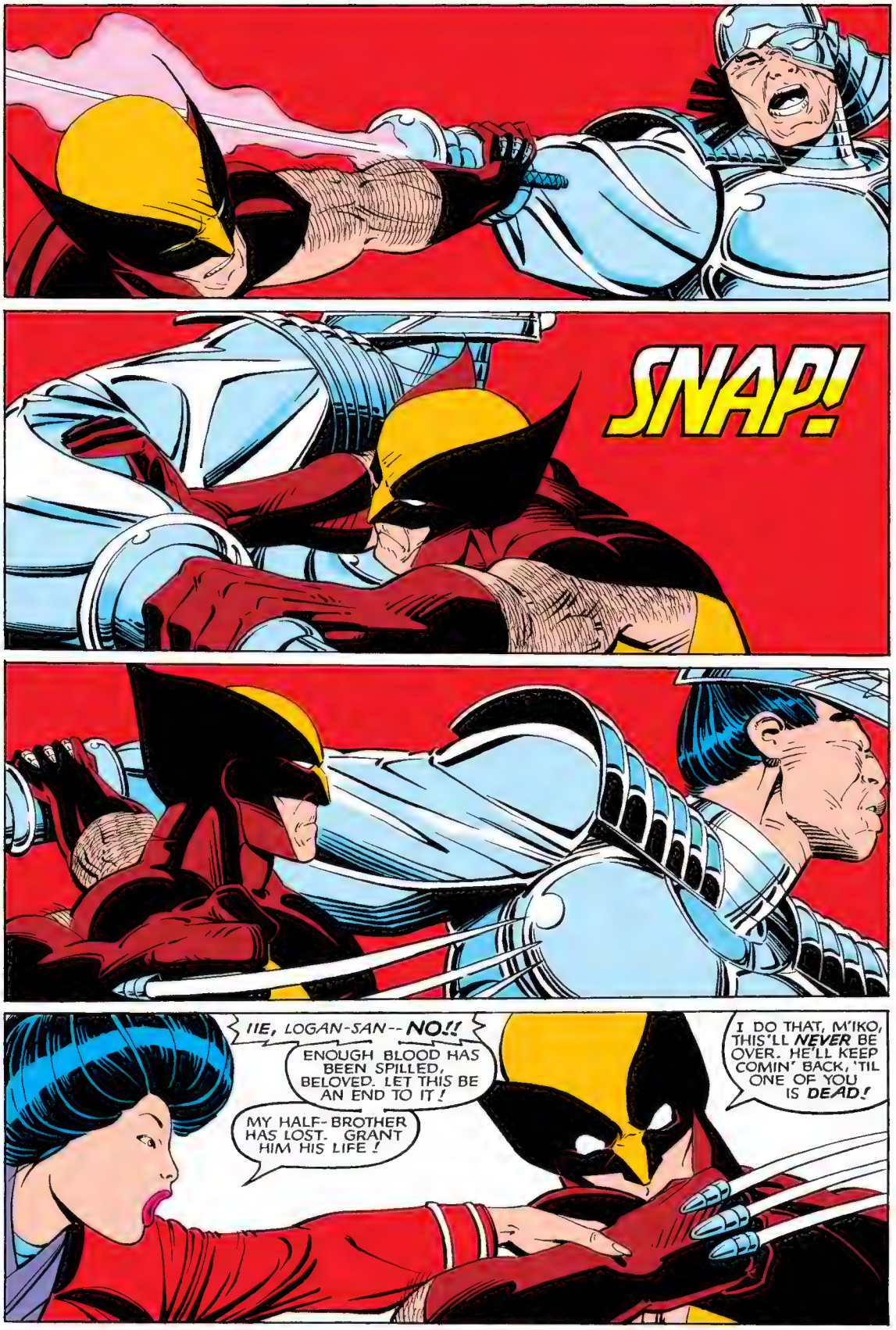

NEXT TIME, WATCH YOUR STEP. THAT STATUE COULD'A BEEN YOU!
MAH HERO. A SAVE LIKE THAT DESERVES A REWARD.
NO.
DON'T EVER PULL A STUNT LIKE THAT, MAKE A THREAT LIKE THAT-- T' ME, OR ANY OTHER X-MAN-- EVEN AS A JOKE, UNDERSTAND?!
AH... AH DIDN'T MEAN ANY HARM!
THAT'S WHY YOU'RE STILL BREATHING.
WHAT MAKES ROGUE A MUTANT IS HER ABILITY TO ABSORB THE POWERS, MEM'RIES-- THE TOTAL IDENTITY-- OF WHOEVER SHE TOUCHES. THE SLIGHTEST PHYSICAL CONTACT TRIGGERS THE TRANSFER AN', WHILE IT'S USUALLY TEMPORARY, ONCE IT WAS PERMANENT.
HER VICTIM WAS AN OLD FRIEND O' MINE. THAT'S NOT EASILY FORGOTTEN, OR FORGIVEN.
BINGO!
WOLVERINE, WHAT'S THAT SMELL?
DECAY. OUR ESTEEMED CRIME-LORD, NABATONE YOKUSE, JOINED HIS ANCESTORS OVER A WEEK AGO.
DON'T COME ANY CLOSER, KID, HE ISN'T VERY PRETTY.
BUT DIDN'T LADY MARIKO SAY SHE'D SEEN Mr. NABATONE EARLIER TONIGHT, THAT HE'D HELPED ARRANGE THE MEETING? HOW COULD HE DO THAT IF HE WAS DEAD?
AN IMPOSTER. WE'VE BEEN SUCKERED!
WHILE WE'RE OUT IN THE BOONDOCKS, CHASIN' SMOKE, THE SAMURAI HAS A CLEAR SHOT AT MARIKO AN' THE X-MEN!

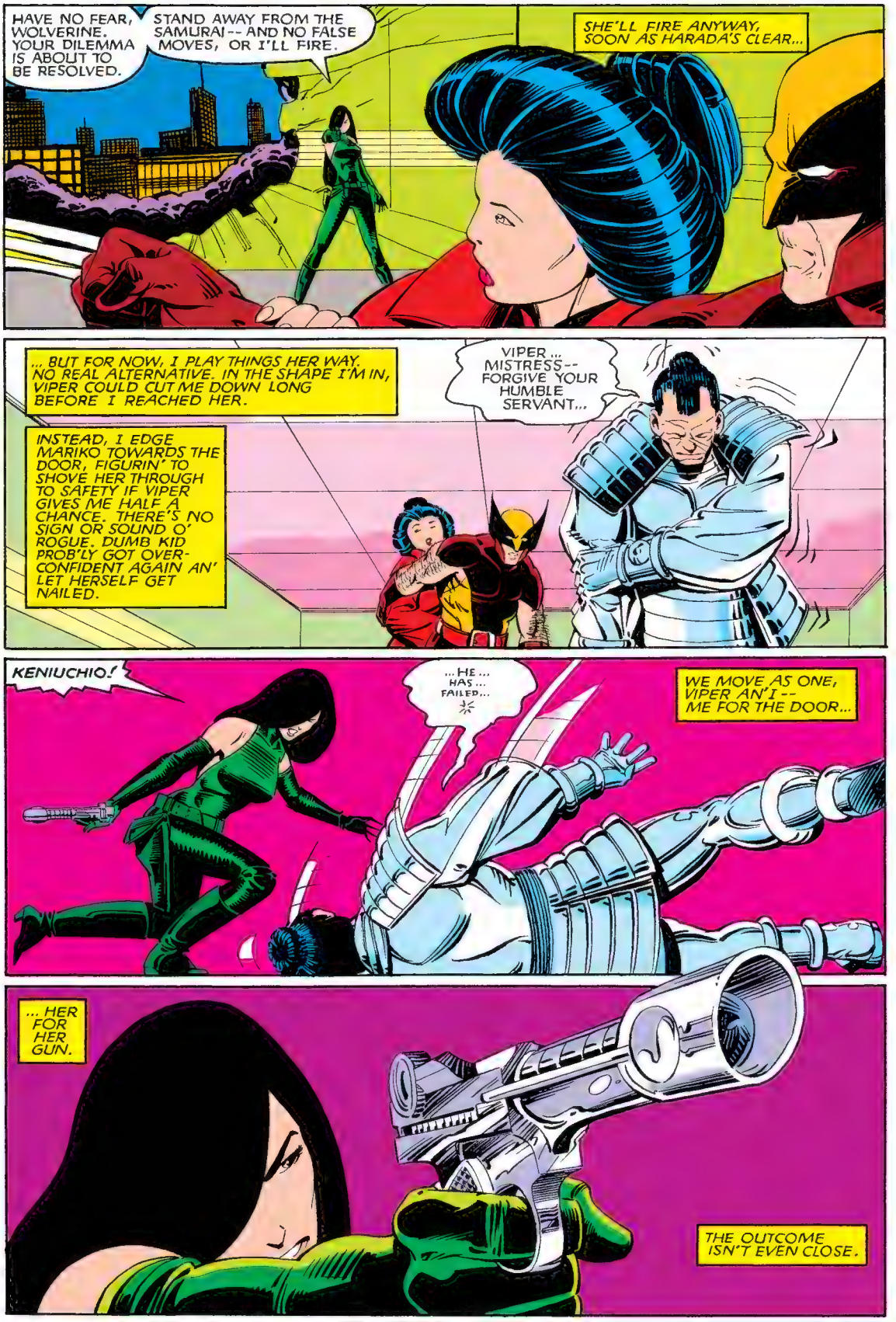

ELSEWHERE, AGAIN...
NIFTY, WIND-RIDER.
IF THAT BOLT OF LIGHTNING DOESN'T TEACH THESE LOWLIFES THE ERROR OF THEIR WAYS, NOTHING WILL.
I HAVE NEVER USED MY POWERS TO DELIBERATELY INFLICT PAIN.
IT WAS NO LESS THAN THEY DESERVED.
AND A FAR GENTLER FATE THAN THEY HAD IN STORE FOR US.
LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, AFTER TONIGHT THEY'LL PROBABLY THINK TWICE...
...ABOUT GOING OUT IN THE RAIN, MUCH LESS MUGGING ANYONE.
YOU KNOW...
... I THINK YOU'RE *RIGHT!*
WHATEVER IT MEANS-- THIS MADNESS OF YOURS THAT HAS INFECTED ME--
---I *WELCOME* IT!

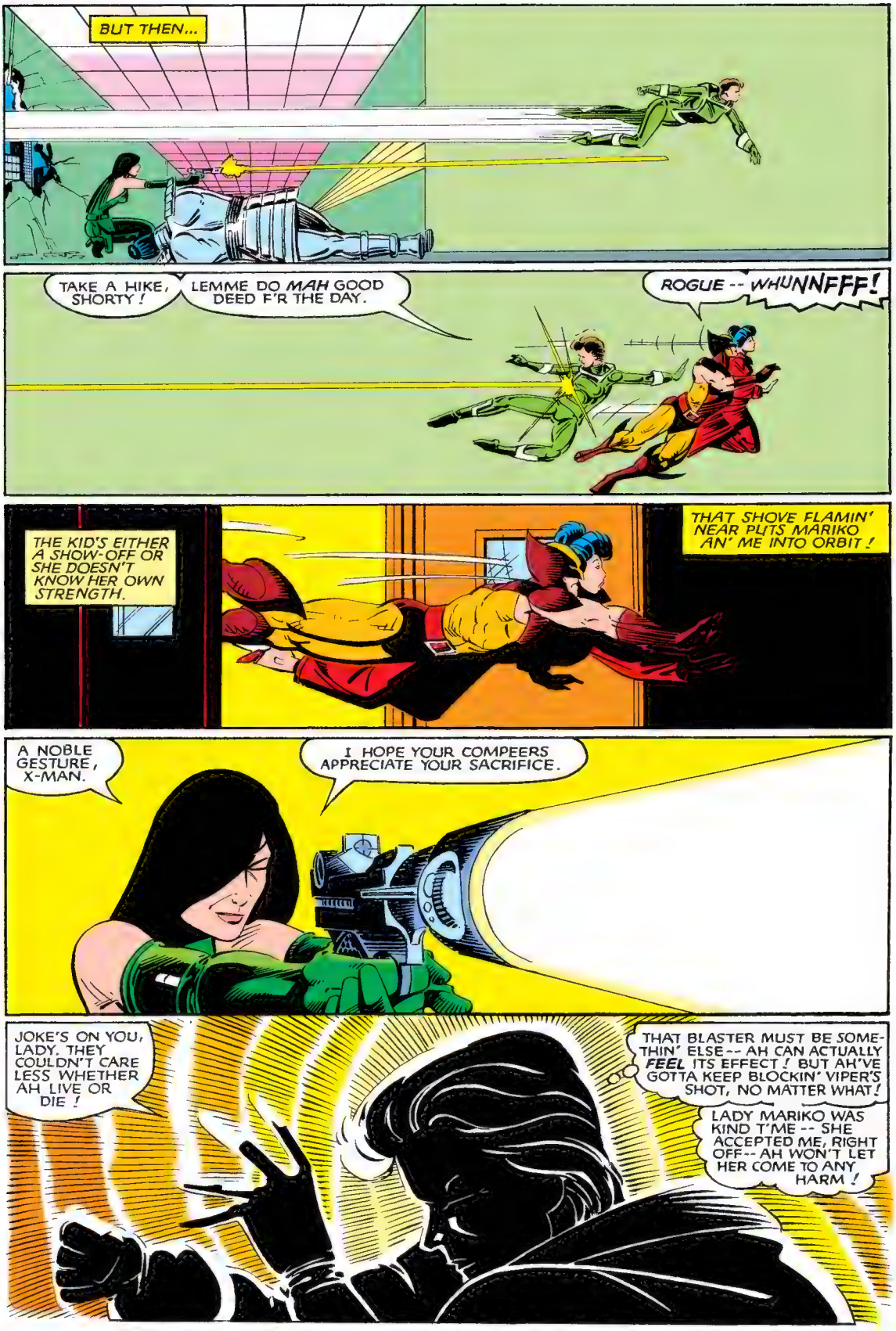

TRY AS WE MIGHT T' REACH THE HOSPITAL IN TIME...
... I'VE A NASTY FEELING...
...WE'LL BE TOO LATE.
BE QUICK, BE EFFICIENT. I WANT NO WITNESSES...
...NO SURVIVORS.

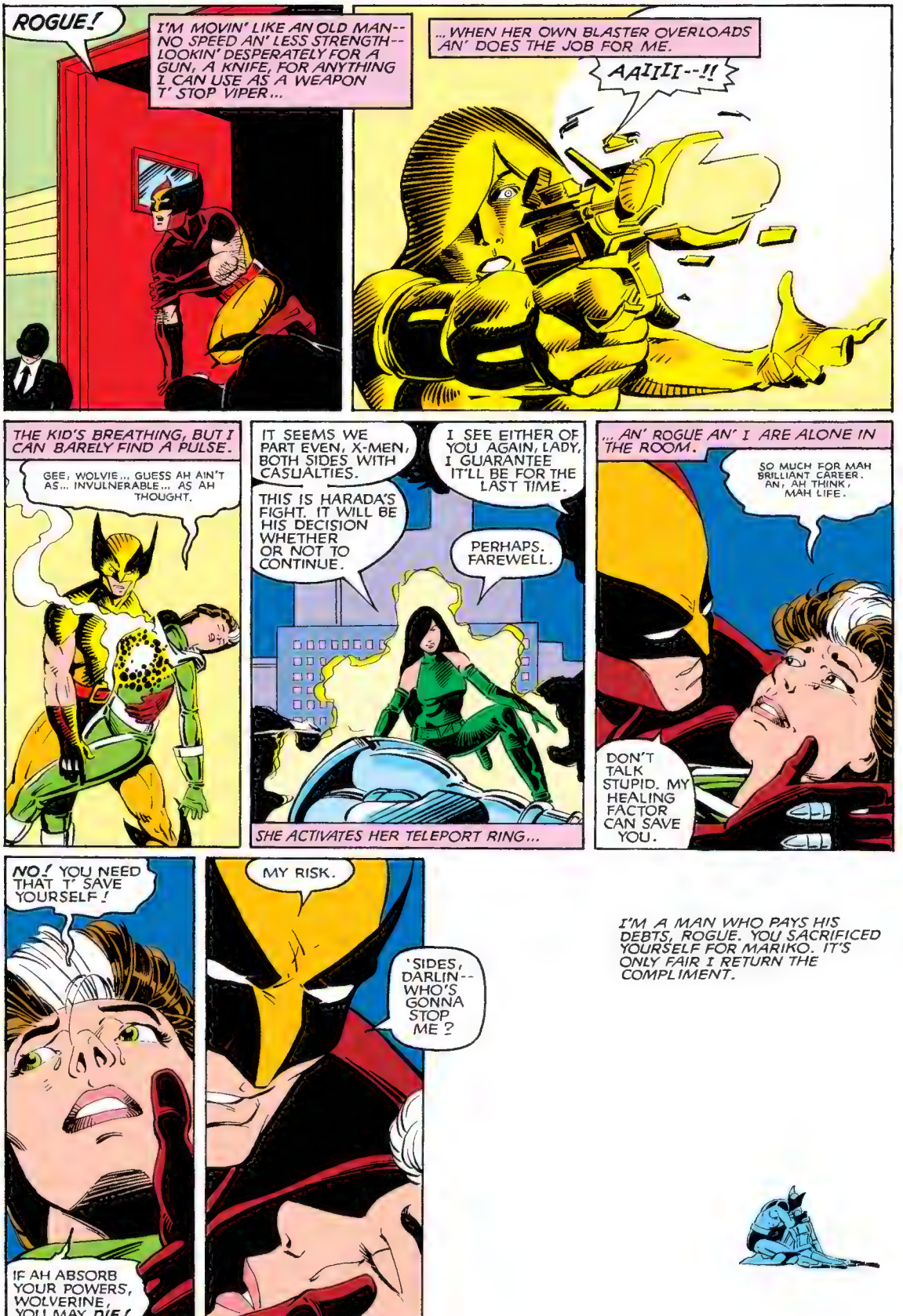
THAT AIN'T VERY SOCIABLE, VIPER-HONEY.
MAYBE YOU AN' YOUR PLAY-MATES OUGHTTA DELAY YOUR VISIT, 'TIL Y'ALL LEARN BETTER MANNERS.
HAPPY LANDINGS!
SHE'S ONLY A GIRL ...
...DESPITE HER POWERS-- WHILE YOU REMAIN THE DEADLIEST ASSASSINS IN JAPAN!
KILL HER!
AS YOU COMMAND, VIPER.
SPLENDID. THEY SHOULD KEEP THE BRAT BUSY...
... LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO FIND THE SILVER SAMURAI...
... AND FINISH WHAT WE CAME HERE TO DO.

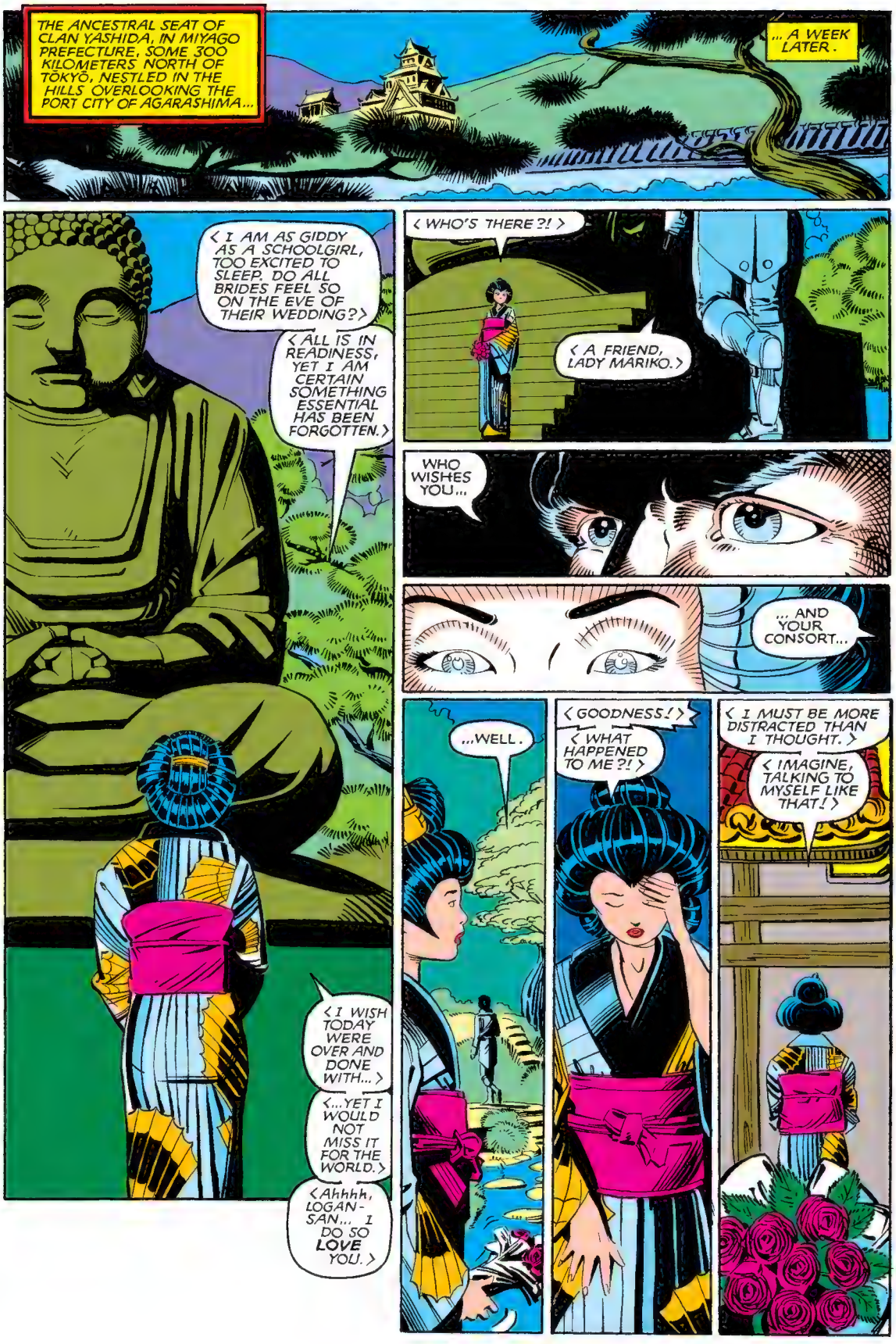
THERE'S JUST ME LEFT UP HERE, SAMURAI. SHOW YOURSELF...
...IF YOU DARE.
YOU WILL NOT FIND ME LACKING IN COURAGE, GAIJIN.
DO TELL? THAT WHY YOU BROUGHT AN ARMY?
I NEED NO HELP TO CLAIM MY BIRTHRIGHT, DOG--
-- OR TO DEAL WITH YOU!
HARADA'S ENERGY SWORD CAN CUT THROUGH ANYTHING, OR SO HE BELIEVES.
BUT MY CLAWS ARE FORGED O' PURE ADAMANTIUM-- THE STRONGEST METAL KNOWN--
-- AN' MY SKELETON IS A NEAR-UNBREAKABLE MIX OF ADAMANTIUM AN' BONE.
I SURVIVE HIS FIRST CUT.
HE SURVIVES MINE.

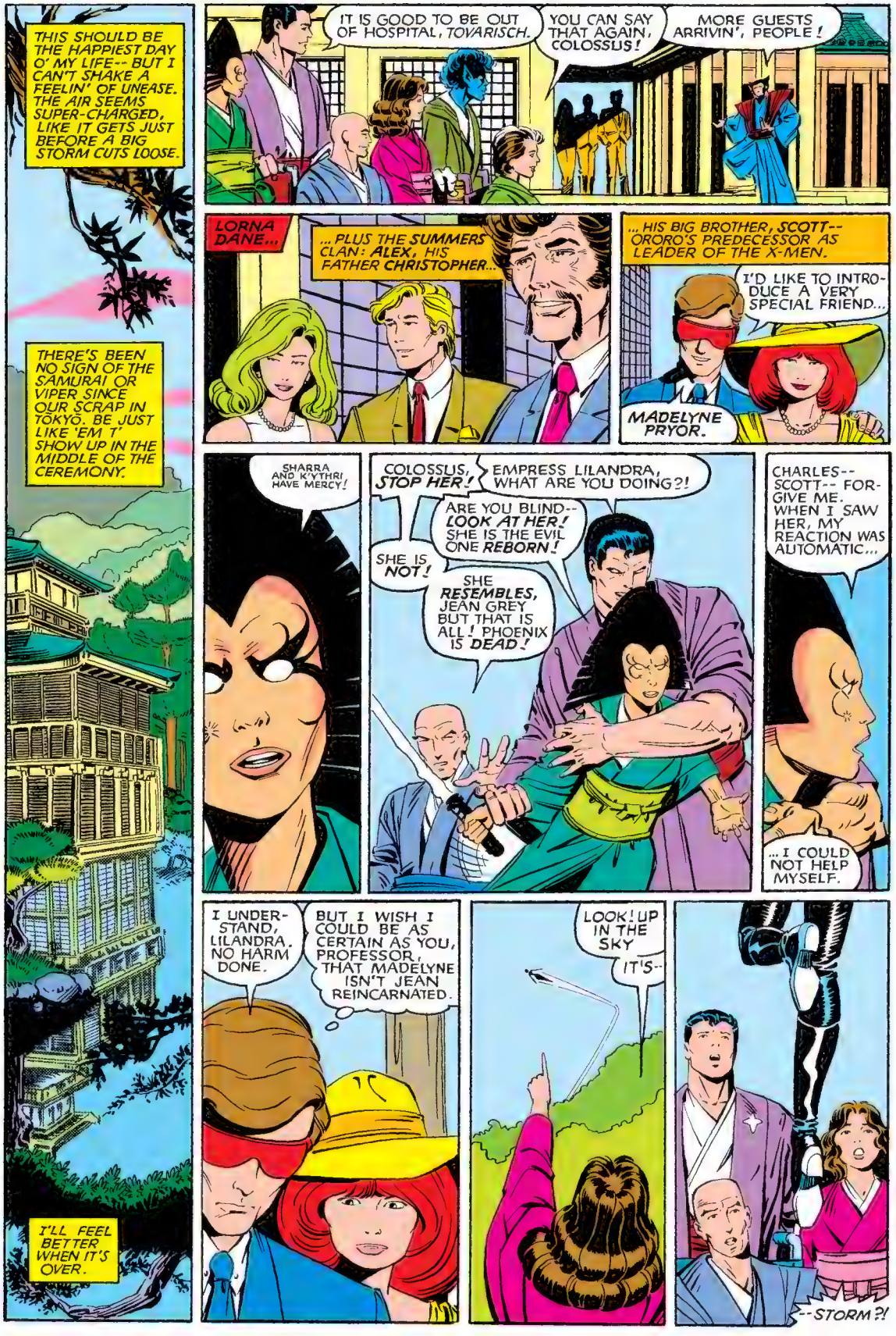

SNAP!
IIE, LOGAN-SAN-- NO!!
ENOUGH BLOOD HAS BEEN SPILLED, BELOVED. LET THIS BE AN END TO IT!
MY HALF-BROTHER HAS LOST. GRANT HIM HIS LIFE!
I DO THAT, M'IKO, THIS'LL NEVER BE OVER. HE'LL KEEP COMIN' BACK, 'TIL ONE OF YOU IS DEAD!

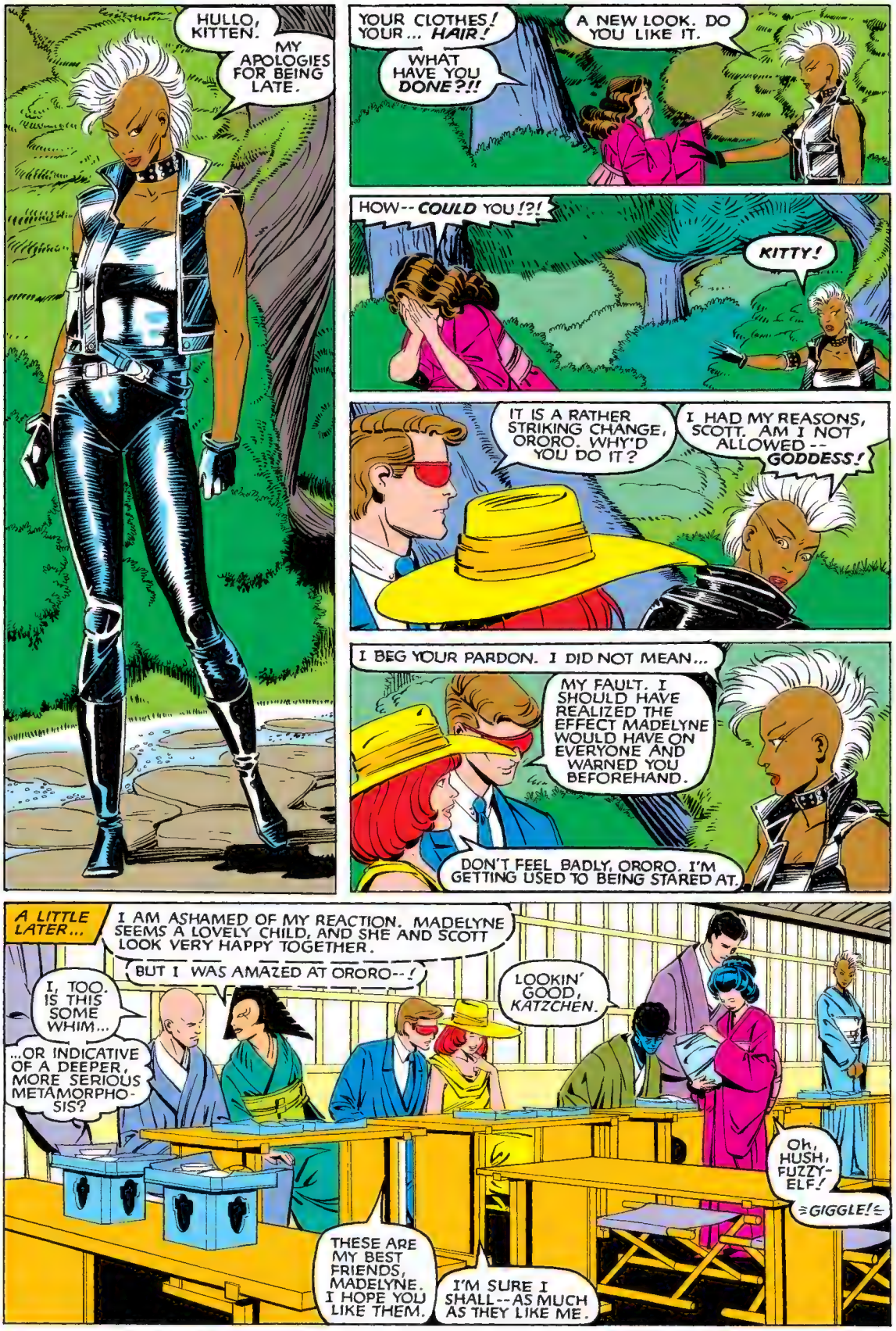

HAVE NO FEAR, WOLVERINE. YOUR DILEMMA IS ABOUT TO BE RESOLVED.
STAND AWAY FROM THE SAMURAI -- AND NO FALSE MOVES, OR I'LL FIRE.
SHE'LL FIRE ANYWAY, SOON AS HARADA'S CLEAR...
... BUT FOR NOW, I PLAY THINGS HER WAY. NO REAL ALTERNATIVE. IN THE SHAPE I'M IN, VIPER COULD CUT ME DOWN LONG BEFORE I REACHED HER.
INSTEAD, I EDGE MARIKO TOWARDS THE DOOR, FIGURIN' TO SHOVE HER THROUGH TO SAFETY IF VIPER GIVES ME HALF A CHANCE. THERE'S NO SIGN OR SOUND O' ROGUE. DUMB KID PROB'LY GOT OVER-CONFIDENT AGAIN AN' LET HERSELF GET NAILED.
VIPER... MISTRESS -- FORGIVE YOUR HUMBLE SERVANT...
KENIUCHIO!
...HE... HAS... FAILED...
WE MOVE AS ONE, VIPER AN'I -- ME FOR THE DOOR...
... HER FOR HER GUN.
THE OUTCOME ISN'T EVEN CLOSE.

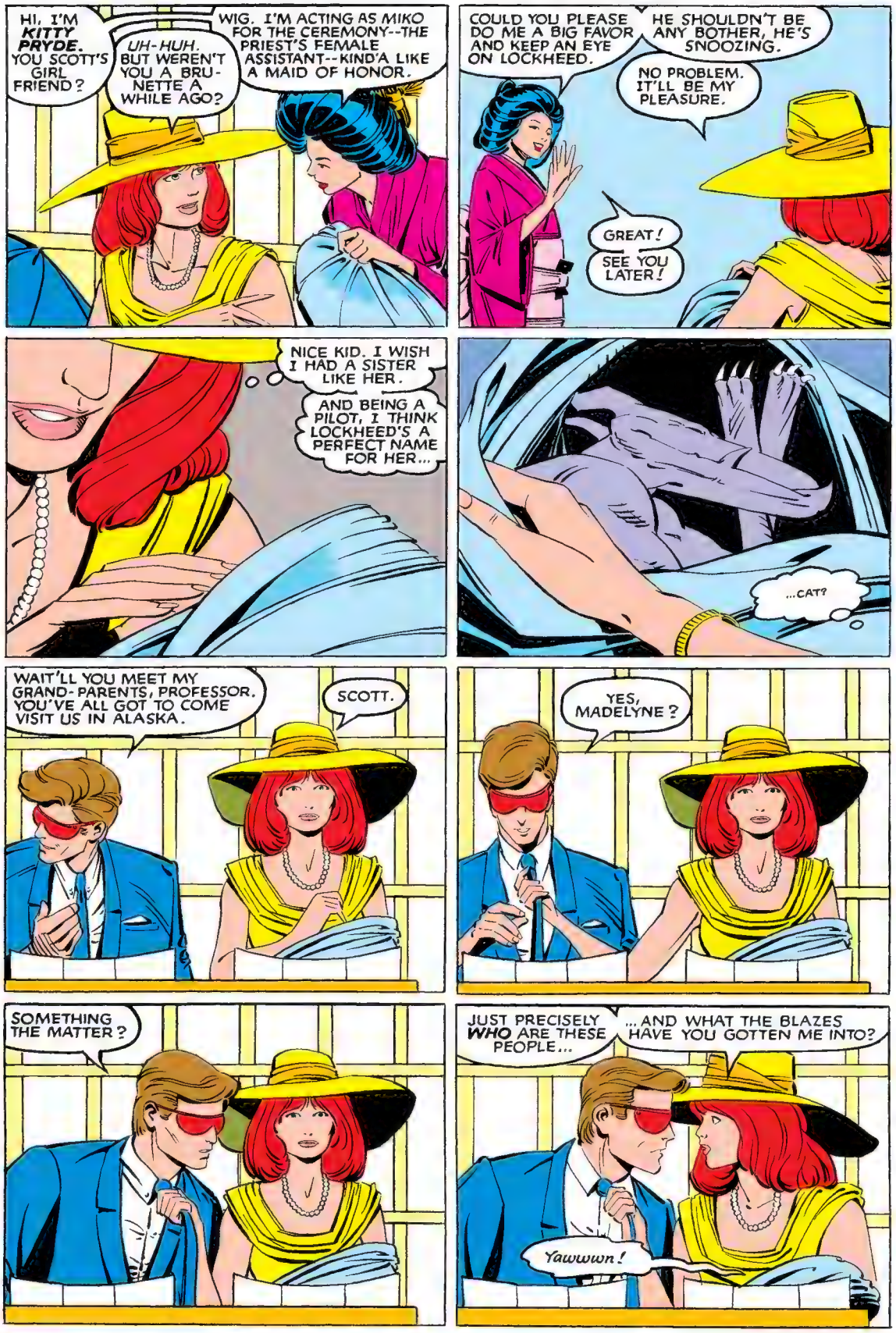

BUT THEN...
TAKE A HIKE, SHORTY!
LEMME DO MAH GOOD DEED F'R THE DAY.
ROGUE -- WHUNNFFF!
THE KID'S EITHER A SHOW-OFF OR SHE DOESN'T KNOW HER OWN STRENGTH.
THAT SHOVE FLAMIN' NEAR PUTS MARIKO AN' ME INTO ORBIT!
A NOBLE GESTURE, X-MAN.
I HOPE YOUR COMPEERS APPRECIATE YOUR SACRIFICE.
JOKE'S ON YOU, LADY. THEY COULDN'T CARE LESS WHETHER AH LIVE OR DIE!
THAT BLASTER MUST BE SOMETHIN' ELSE -- AH CAN ACTUALLY FEEL ITS EFFECT! BUT AH'VE GOTTA KEEP BLOCKIN' VIPER'S SHOT, NO MATTER WHAT!
LADY MARIKO WAS KIND T'ME -- SHE ACCEPTED ME, RIGHT OFF -- AH WON'T LET HER COME TO ANY HARM!


ROGUE!
I'M MOVIN' LIKE AN OLD MAN-- NO SPEED AN' LESS STRENGTH-- LOOKIN' DESPERATELY FOR A GUN, A KNIFE, FOR ANYTHING I CAN USE AS A WEAPON T' STOP VIPER...
... WHEN HER OWN BLASTER OVERLOADS AN' DOES THE JOB FOR ME.
AAIIII--!!
THE KID'S BREATHING, BUT I CAN BARELY FIND A PULSE.
GEE, WOLVIE... GUESS AH AIN'T AS... INVULNERABLE... AS AH THOUGHT.
IT SEEMS WE PART EVEN, X-MEN, BOTH SIDES WITH CASUALTIES.
I SEE EITHER OF YOU AGAIN, LADY, I GUARANTEE IT'LL BE FOR THE LAST TIME.
THIS IS HARADA'S FIGHT. IT WILL BE HIS DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO CONTINUE.
PERHAPS. FAREWELL.
SHE ACTIVATES HER TELEPORT RING...
... AN' ROGUE AN' I ARE ALONE IN THE ROOM.
SO MUCH FOR MAH BRILLIANT CAREER. AN, AH THINK, MAH LIFE.
DON'T TALK STUPID. MY HEALING FACTOR CAN SAVE YOU.
NO! YOU NEED THAT T' SAVE YOURSELF!
IF AH ABSORB YOUR POWERS, WOLVERINE, YOU MAY DIE!
MY RISK.
'SIDES, DARLIN-- WHO'S GONNA STOP ME?
I'M A MAN WHO PAYS HIS DEBTS, ROGUE. YOU SACRIFICED YOURSELF FOR MARIKO. IT'S ONLY FAIR I RETURN THE COMPLIMENT.

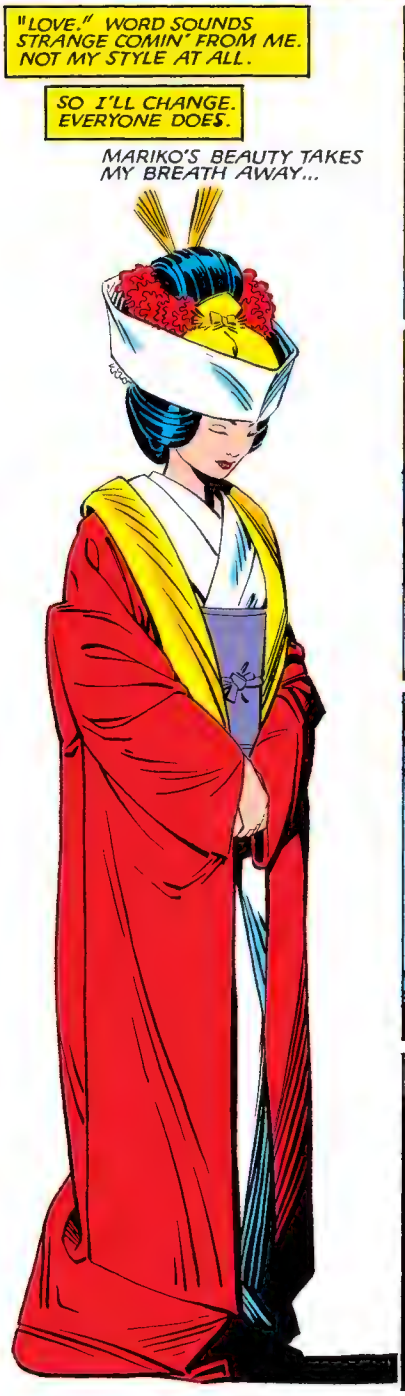

THE ANCESTRAL SEAT OF CLAN YASHIDA, IN MIYAGO PREFECTURE, SOME 300 KILOMETERS NORTH OF TÖKYÖ, NESTLED IN THE HILLS OVERLOOKING THE PORT CITY OF AGARASHIMA...
...A WEEK LATER.
〈I AM AS GIDDY AS A SCHOOLGIRL, TOO EXCITED TO SLEEP. DO ALL BRIDES FEEL SO ON THE EVE OF THEIR WEDDING?〉
〈ALL IS IN READINESS, YET I AM CERTAIN SOMETHING ESSENTIAL HAS BEEN FORGOTTEN.〉
〈I WISH TODAY WERE OVER AND DONE WITH...〉
〈...YET I WOULD NOT MISS IT FOR THE WORLD.〉
〈Ahhhh, LOGAN-SAN... I DO SO LOVE YOU.〉
〈WHO'S THERE?!〉
〈A FRIEND, LADY MARIKO.〉
WHO WISHES YOU...
...AND YOUR CONSORT...
...WELL.
〈GOODNESS!〉
〈WHAT HAPPENED TO ME?!〉
〈I MUST BE MORE DISTRACTED THAN I THOUGHT.〉
〈I IMAGINE, TALKING TO MYSELF LIKE THAT!〉


THIS SHOULD BE THE HAPPIEST DAY O' MY LIFE-- BUT I CAN'T SHAKE A FEELIN' OF UNEASE. THE AIR SEEMS SUPER-CHARGED, LIKE IT GETS JUST BEFORE A BIG STORM CUTS LOOSE.
THERE'S BEEN NO SIGN OF THE SAMURAI OR VIPER SINCE OUR SCRAP IN TOKYO. BE JUST LIKE 'EM T' SHOW UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CEREMONY.
I'LL FEEL BETTER WHEN IT'S OVER.
IT IS GOOD TO BE OUT OF HOSPITAL, TOVARISCH.
YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN, COLOSSUS!
MORE GUESTS ARRIVIN', PEOPLE!
LORNA DANE...
...PLUS THE SUMMERS CLAN: ALEX, HIS FATHER CHRISTOPHER...
...HIS BIG BROTHER, SCOTT-- OROROO'S PREDECESSOR AS LEADER OF THE X-MEN.
I'D LIKE TO INTRODUCE A VERY SPECIAL FRIEND...
MADELYNE PRYOR.
SHARRA AND KYTHRI HAVE MERCY!
COLOSSUS, STOP HER!
EMPRESS LILANDRA, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
ARE YOU BLIND-- LOOK AT HER! SHE IS THE EVIL ONE REBORN!
SHE IS NOT!
SHE RESEMBLES, JEAN GREY BUT THAT IS ALL! PHOENIX IS DEAD!
CHARLES-- SCOTT-- FORGIVE ME. WHEN I SAW HER, MY REACTION WAS AUTOMATIC...
...I COULD NOT HELP MYSELF.
I UNDERSTAND, LILANDRA. NO HARM DONE.
BUT I WISH I COULD BE AS CERTAIN AS YOU, PROFESSOR, THAT MADELYNE ISN'T JEAN REINCARNATED.
LOOK! UP IN THE SKY
IT'S--
--STORM?!

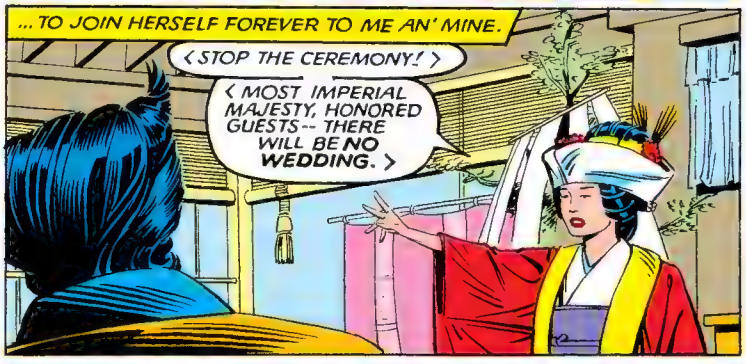

HULLO, KITTEN.
MY APOLOGIES FOR BEING LATE.
YOUR CLOTHES! YOUR... HAIR!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!!
A NEW LOOK. DO YOU LIKE IT.
HOW-- COULD YOU!?!
KITTY!
IT IS A RATHER STRIKING CHANGE, ORORO. WHY'D YOU DO IT?
I HAD MY REASONS, SCOTT. AM I NOT ALLOWED -- GODDESS!
I BEG YOUR PARDON. I DID NOT MEAN...
MY FAULT. I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED THE EFFECT MADELYNE WOULD HAVE ON EVERYONE AND WARNED YOU BEFOREHAND.
DON'T FEEL BADLY, ORORO. I'M GETTING USED TO BEING STARED AT.
A LITTLE LATER...
I AM ASHAMED OF MY REACTION. MADELYNE SEEMS A LOVELY CHILD, AND SHE AND SCOTT LOOK VERY HAPPY TOGETHER.
BUT I WAS AMAZED AT ORORO--!
I, TOO. IS THIS SOME WHIM...
...OR INDICATIVE OF A DEEPER, MORE SERIOUS METAMORPHOSIS?
LOOKIN' GOOD, KATZCHEN.
Oh, HUSH, FUZZY-ELF!
≈GIGGLE!≈
THESE ARE MY BEST FRIENDS, MADELYNE. I HOPE YOU LIKE THEM.
I'M SURE I SHALL--AS MUCH AS THEY LIKE ME.


HI, I'M KITTY PRYDE. YOU SCOTT'S GIRL FRIEND?
UH-HUH. BUT WEREN'T YOU A BRUNETTE A WHILE AGO?
WIG. I'M ACTING AS MIKO FOR THE CEREMONY--THE PRIEST'S FEMALE ASSISTANT--KIND'A LIKE A MAID OF HONOR.
COULD YOU PLEASE DO ME A BIG FAVOR AND KEEP AN EYE ON LOCKHEED.
HE SHOULDN'T BE ANY BOTHER, HE'S SNOOZING.
NO PROBLEM. IT'LL BE MY PLEASURE.
GREAT! SEE YOU LATER!
NICE KID. I WISH I HAD A SISTER LIKE HER.
AND BEING A PILOT, I THINK LOCKHEED'S A PERFECT NAME FOR HER...
...CAT?
WAIT'LL YOU MEET MY GRAND-PARENTS, PROFESSOR. YOU'VE ALL GOT TO COME VISIT US IN ALASKA.
SCOTT.
YES, MADELYNE?
SOMETHING THE MATTER?
JUST PRECISELY WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE...
...AND WHAT THE BLAZES HAVE YOU GOTTEN ME INTO?
Yawwwn!

IN DEFERENCE TO MARIKO, THIS IS A SHINZEN KEKKONSHIKI, A TRADITIONAL SHINTŌ WEDDING. ME, I COULDN'T CARE LESS. IF WE WORK OUT, IT WON'T BE BECAUSE OF ANY CEREMONY OR SLIP OF OFFICIAL PAPER. AN' IF WE DON'T, THEY WON'T KEEP US TOGETHER.
OUR LOVE IS WHAT COUNTS. THE REST IS DECORATION.

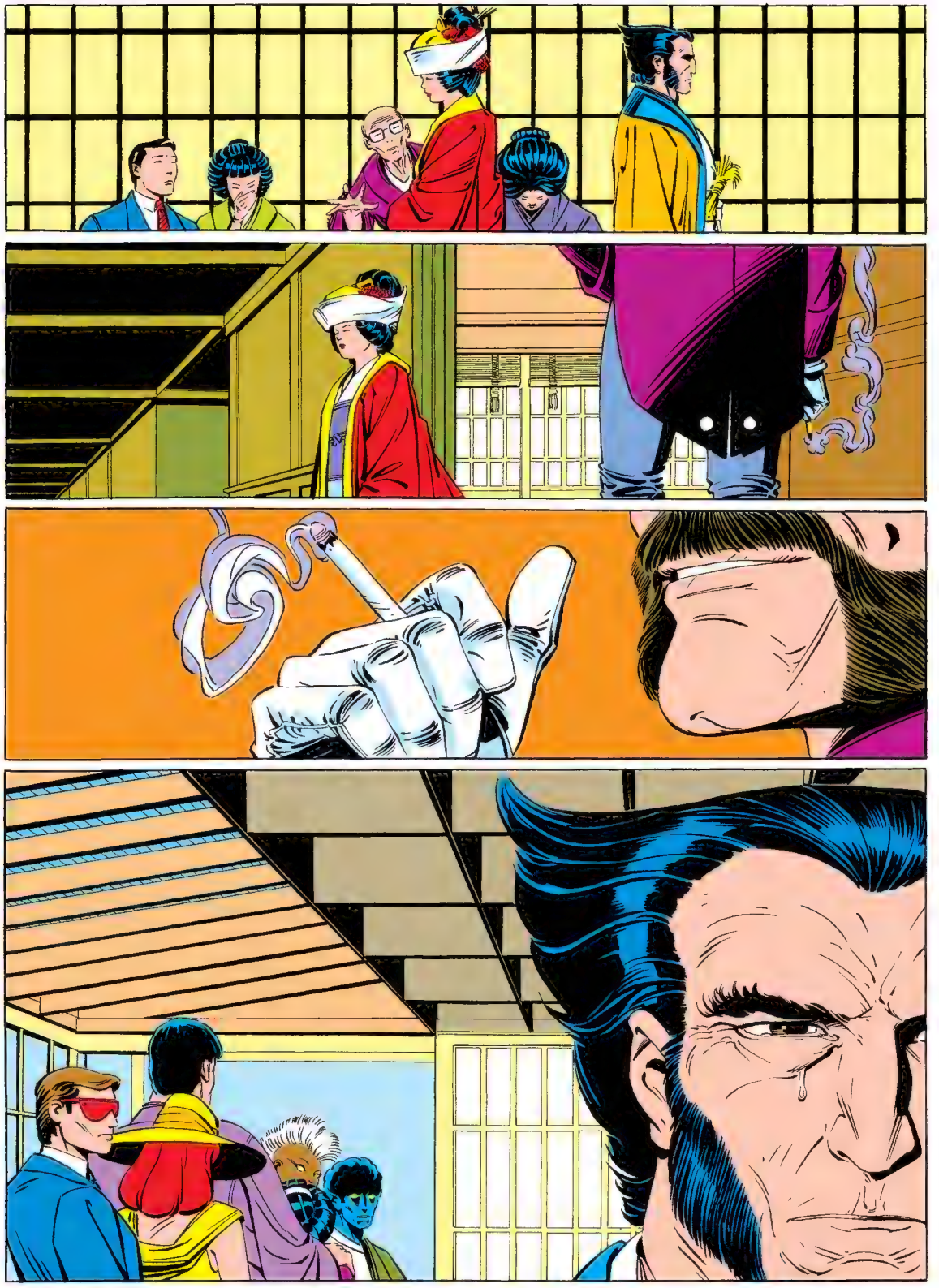

"LOVE." WORD SOUNDS STRANGE COMIN' FROM ME. NOT MY STYLE AT ALL.
SO I'LL CHANGE. EVERYONE DOES.
MARIKO'S BEAUTY TAKES MY BREATH AWAY...

...AS I FOLLOW HER TO THE ALTAR, WHERE WE'LL TAKE OUR VOWS.
HER UNDER KIMONO'S WHITE, FOR MOURNING--SIGNIFYING HER SYMBOLIC DEATH AS SHE LEAVES HER PARENTS' FAMILY...


...TO JOIN HERSELF FOREVER TO ME AN' MINE.
〈STOP THE CEREMONY!〉
〈MOST IMPERIAL MAJESTY, HONORED GUESTS-- THERE WILL BE NO WEDDING.〉

〈WHY?!〉

〈BECAUSE, GAIJIN--〉
〈-- YOU ARE NOT WORTHY.〉



NEXT ISSUE: ROMANCES

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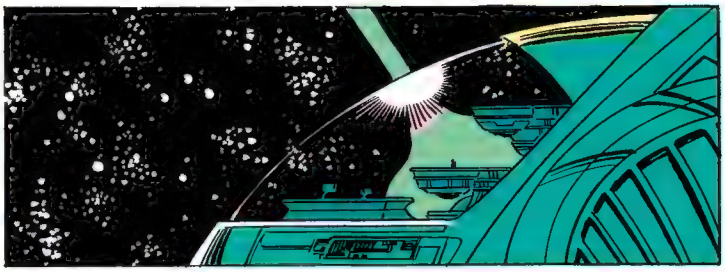

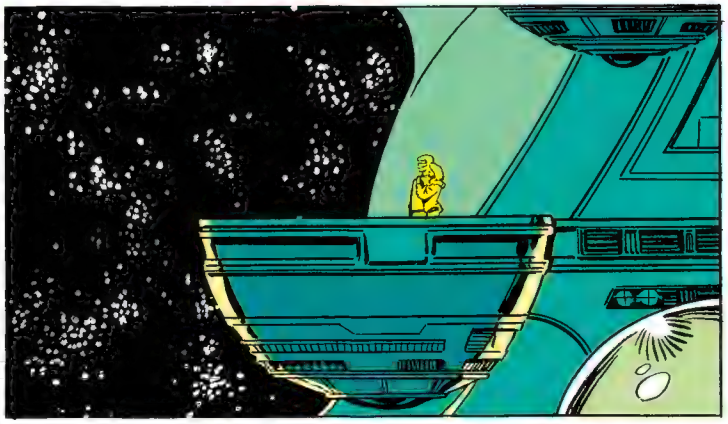

Romances

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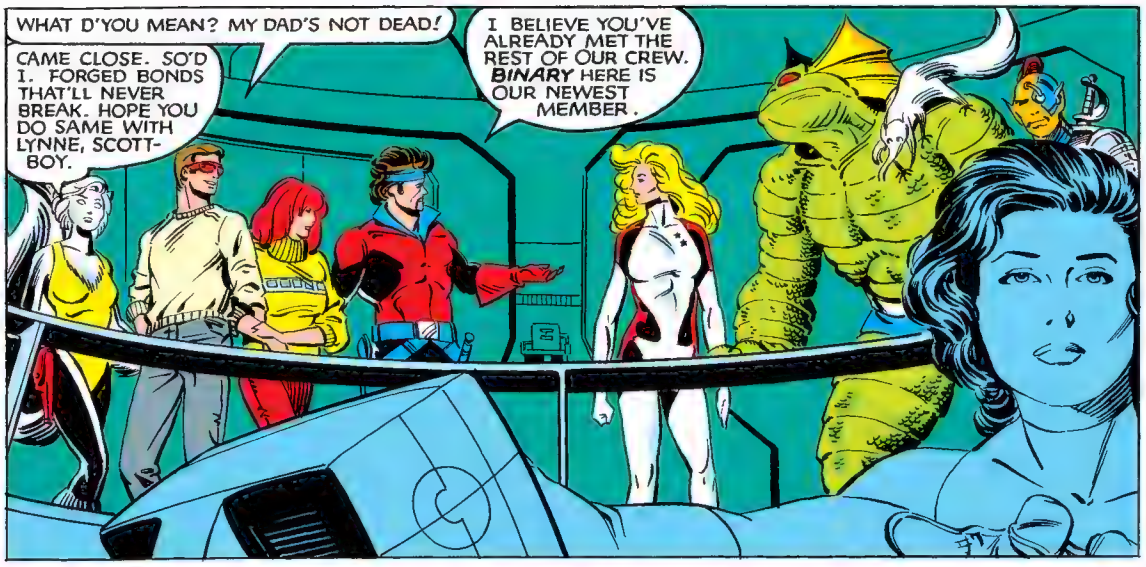
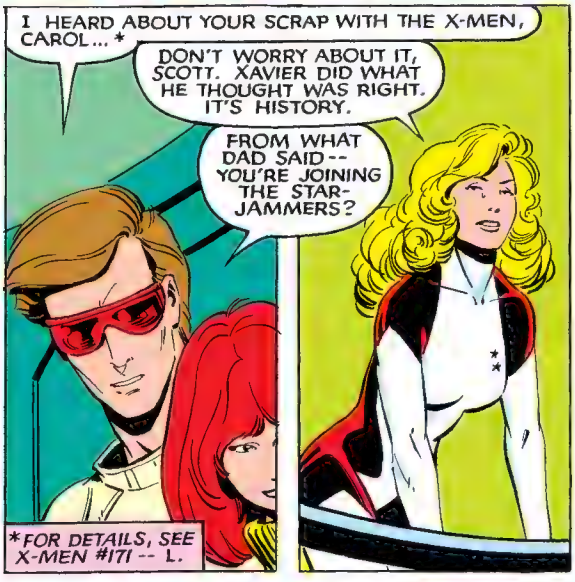
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

SO ARE YOU.
Ahem!
MR. SUMMERS!
HI, DAD, MAM'SELLE HEPZIBAH.
WE, ah, DIDN'T REALIZE ANY-ONE ELSE WAS AROUND.
SHAME TO QUIT ON OUR ACCOUNT, KITLINGS--'SPECIALLY WHEN YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE HAVING SO MUCH FUN.
SPARKS IDEAS, eh, CORSAIR?
LATER.
YAH! CAN'T WAIT!
SCOTT WAS SHOWING ME THE VIEW.
LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON--YUM!
HEPZIBAH!
I'VE BEEN AROUND PLANES ALL MY LIFE--I LEARNED TO FLY BE-FORE I COULD DRIVE. AS A KID, I FANTASIZED ABOUT SOARING TO THE STARS. BUT I NEVER IMAGINED I'D ACTUALLY SEE IT HAPPEN.
THIS SHIP, YOU AND YOUR FELLOW STAR-JAMMERS--THEY'RE A DREAM COME TRUE.
WOULD YOU LIKE THE NICKLE TOUR, Ms. PRYOR?
YOU BET!
MADELYNE'S MY DREAM COME TRUE, HEPZIBAH.
OH? SO WHY I HEAR DOUBT IN VOICE, SCOTT-BOY?
EASY TO TALK CARING, LOVING--FAR HARDER TO SHARE BLOOD. YOU DIE FOR HER, SCOTT-BOY--OR SHE FOR YOU--LIKE CORSAIR DID LONGAGO FOR ME?

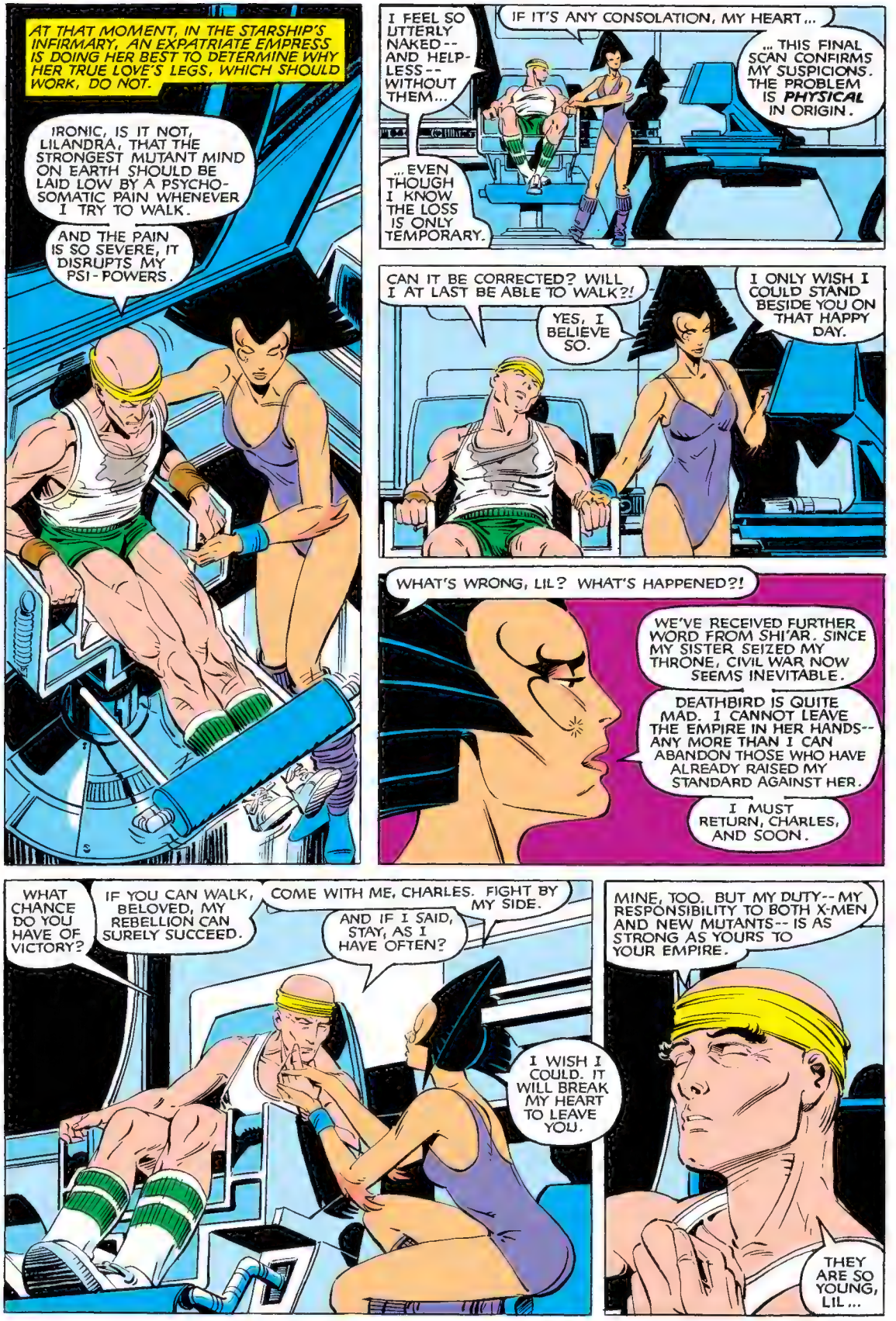

WHAT D'YOU MEAN? MY DAD'S NOT DEAD!
CAME CLOSE. SO'D I. FORGED BONDS THAT'LL NEVER BREAK. HOPE YOU DO SAME WITH LYNNE, SCOTT-BOY.
I BELIEVE YOU'VE ALREADY MET THE REST OF OUR CREW. BINARY HERE IS OUR NEWEST MEMBER.

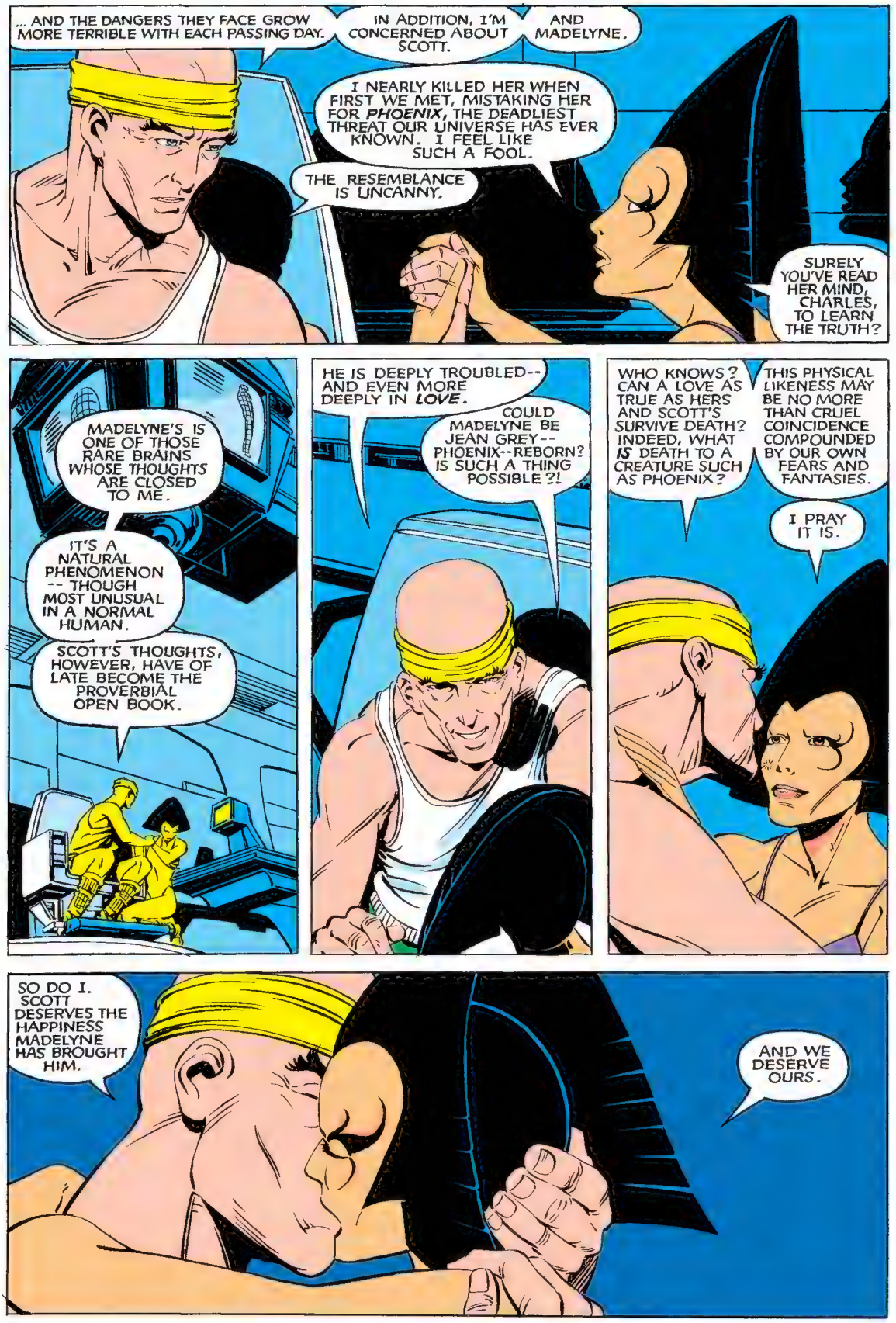

I HEARD ABOUT YOUR SCRAP WITH THE X-MEN, CAROL... *
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, SCOTT. XAVIER DID WHAT HE THOUGHT WAS RIGHT. IT'S HISTORY.
FROM WHAT DAD SAID -- YOU'RE JOINING THE STAR-JAMMERS?
*FOR DETAILS, SEE X-MEN #171 -- L.

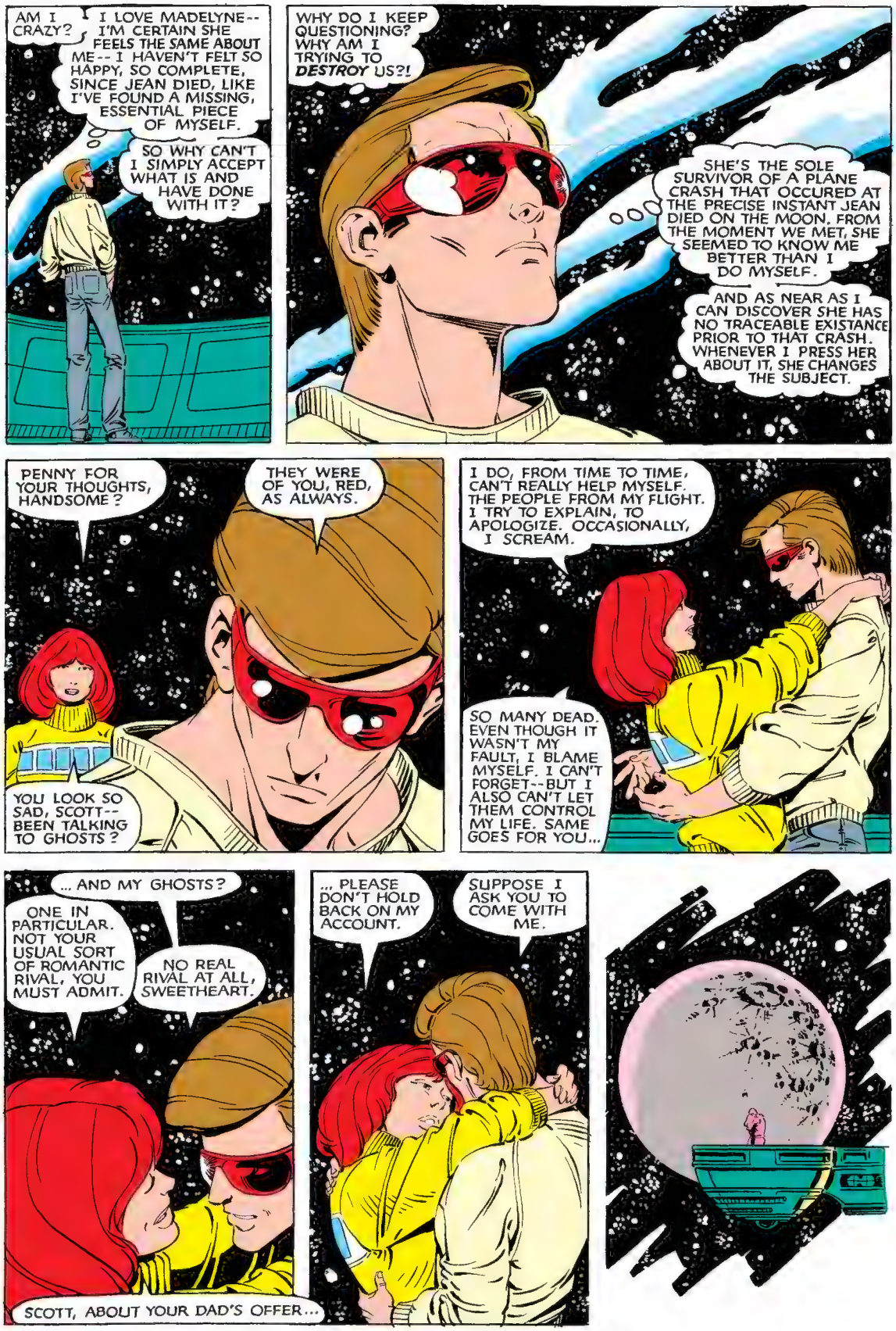
LIKE YOUR LADY, I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO ROAM THE GALAXIES. NOW I'VE GOT THE CHANCE.
ALSO -- MUCH AS I'D WISH OTHERWISE -- THERE'S NO PLACE LEFT FOR ME ON EARTH, NO ONE I TRULY CARE FOR. DEEP SPACE IS WHERE BINARY WAS BORN.
THAT'S WHERE SHE'LL MAKE HER HOME.

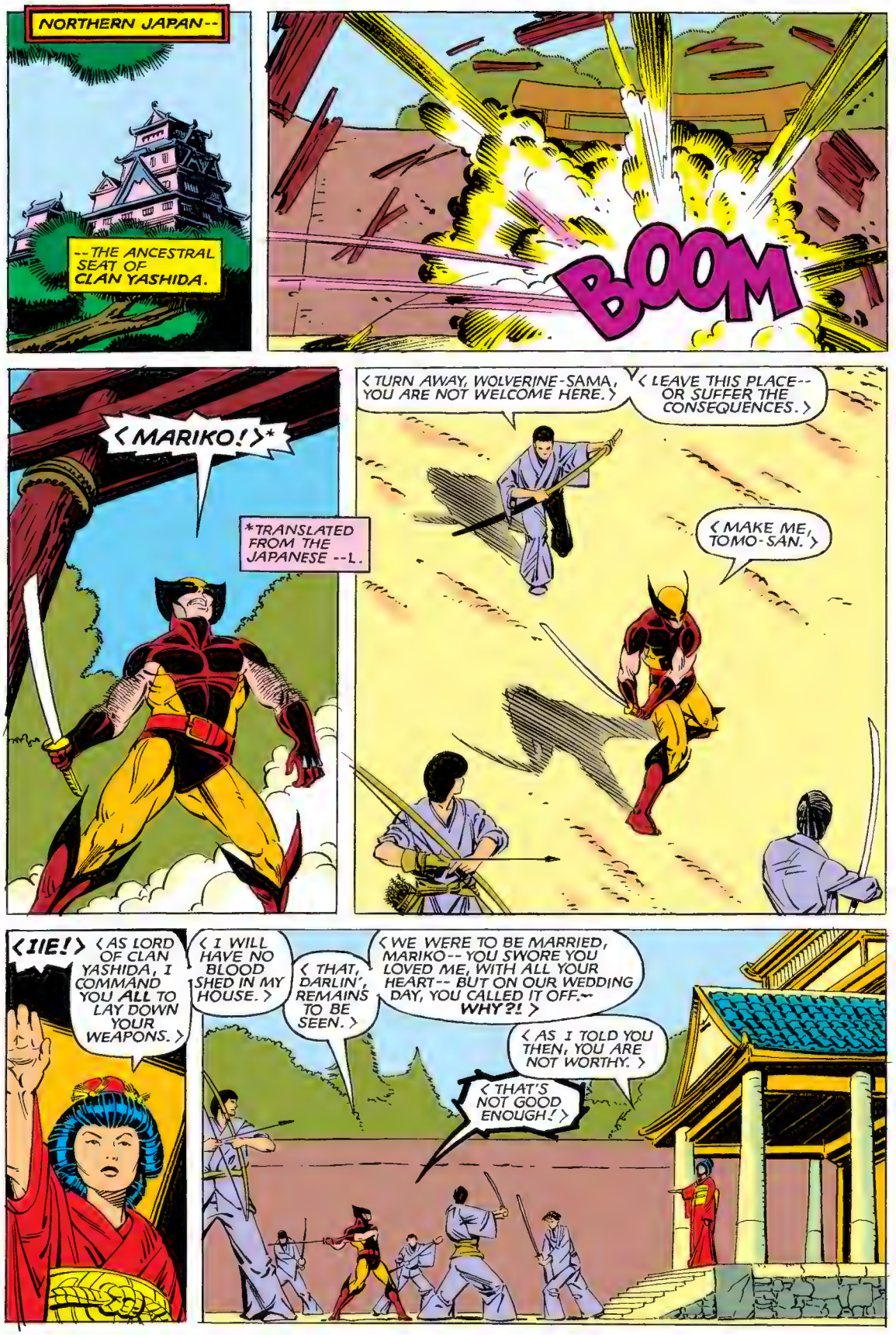
WHEN DO YOU LEAVE?
FAIRLY SOON, I'M AFRAID. AND I CAN'T SAY WHEN -- OR EVEN IF -- WE'LL BE BACK.
WHEN LAST WE SPOKE, YOU MENTIONED COMING WITH US. STILL INTERESTED?

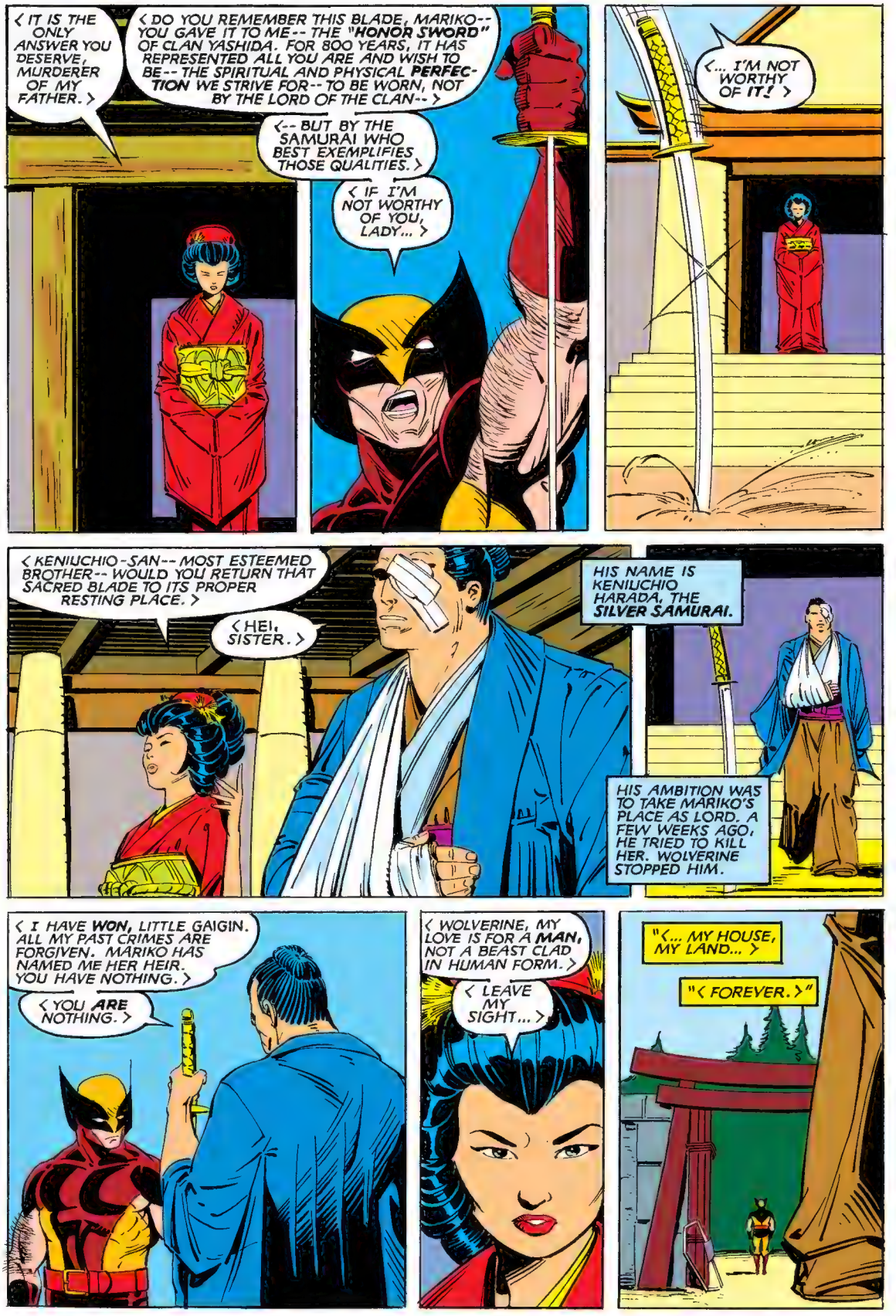
I...
... I DON'T KNOW.


AT THAT MOMENT, IN THE STARSHIP'S INFIRMARY, AN EXPATRIATE EMPRESS IS DOING HER BEST TO DETERMINE WHY HER TRUE LOVE'S LEGS, WHICH SHOULD WORK, DO NOT.
IRONIC, IS IT NOT, LILANDRA, THAT THE STRONGEST MUTANT MIND ON EARTH SHOULD BE LAID LOW BY A PSYCHO-SOMATIC PAIN WHENEVER I TRY TO WALK.
AND THE PAIN IS SO SEVERE, IT DISRUPTS MY PSI-POWERS.
I FEEL SO UTTERLY NAKED-- AND HELP-LESS-- WITHOUT THEM...
...EVEN THOUGH I KNOW THE LOSS IS ONLY TEMPORARY.
IF IT'S ANY CONSOLATION, MY HEART...
...THIS FINAL SCAN CONFIRMS MY SUSPICIONS. THE PROBLEM IS PHYSICAL IN ORIGIN.
CAN IT BE CORRECTED? WILL I AT LAST BE ABLE TO WALK?!
YES, I BELIEVE SO.
I ONLY WISH I COULD STAND BESIDE YOU ON THAT HAPPY DAY.
WHAT'S WRONG, LIL? WHAT'S HAPPENED?!
WE'VE RECEIVED FURTHER WORD FROM SHI'AR. SINCE MY SISTER SEIZED MY THRONE, CIVIL WAR NOW SEEMS INEVITABLE.
DEATHBIRD IS QUITE MAD. I CANNOT LEAVE THE EMPIRE IN HER HANDS-- ANY MORE THAN I CAN ABANDON THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY RAISED MY STANDARD AGAINST HER.
I MUST RETURN, CHARLES, AND SOON.
WHAT CHANCE DO YOU HAVE OF VICTORY?
IF YOU CAN WALK, BELOVED, MY REBELLION CAN SURELY SUCCEED.
COME WITH ME, CHARLES. FIGHT BY MY SIDE.
AND IF I SAID, STAY, AS I HAVE OFTEN?
I WISH I COULD. IT WILL BREAK MY HEART TO LEAVE YOU.
MINE, TOO. BUT MY DUTY-- MY RESPONSIBILITY TO BOTH X-MEN AND NEW MUTANTS-- IS AS STRONG AS YOURS TO YOUR EMPIRE.
THEY ARE SO YOUNG, LIL...

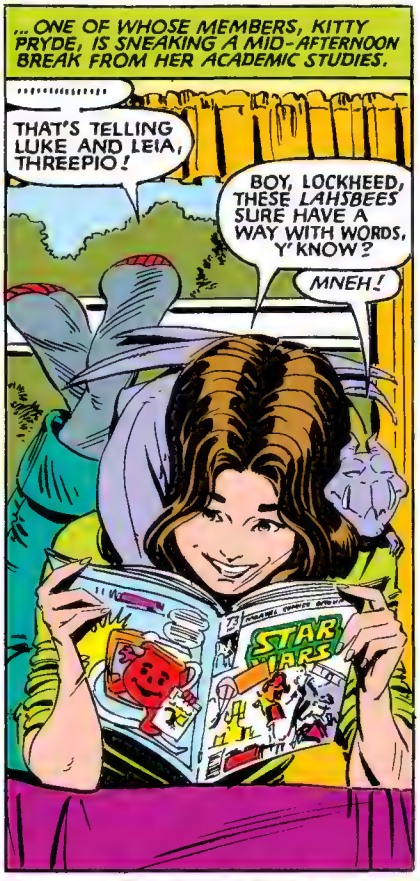

... AND THE DANGERS THEY FACE GROW MORE TERRIBLE WITH EACH PASSING DAY.
IN ADDITION, I'M CONCERNED ABOUT SCOTT.
AND MADELYNE.
I NEARLY KILLED HER WHEN FIRST WE MET, MISTAKING HER FOR PHOENIX, THE DEADLIEST THREAT OUR UNIVERSE HAS EVER KNOWN. I FEEL LIKE SUCH A FOOL.
THE RESEMBLANCE IS UNCANNY.
SURELY YOU'VE READ HER MIND, CHARLES, TO LEARN THE TRUTH?
MADELYNE'S IS ONE OF THOSE RARE BRAINS WHOSE THOUGHTS ARE CLOSED TO ME.
IT'S A NATURAL PHENOMENON -- THOUGH MOST UNUSUAL IN A NORMAL HUMAN.
SCOTT'S THOUGHTS, HOWEVER, HAVE OF LATE BECOME THE PROVERBIAL OPEN BOOK.
HE IS DEEPLY TROUBLED-- AND EVEN MORE DEEPLY IN LOVE.
COULD MADELYNE BE JEAN GREY-- PHOENIX--REBORN? IS SUCH A THING POSSIBLE?!
WHO KNOWS? CAN A LOVE AS TRUE AS HERS AND SCOTT'S SURVIVE DEATH? INDEED, WHAT IS DEATH TO A CREATURE SUCH AS PHOENIX?
THIS PHYSICAL LIKENESS MAY BE NO MORE THAN CRUEL COINCIDENCE COMPOUNDED BY OUR OWN FEARS AND FANTASIES.
I PRAY IT IS.
SO DO I. SCOTT DESERVES THE HAPPINESS MADELYNE HAS BROUGHT HIM.
AND WE DESERVE OURS.

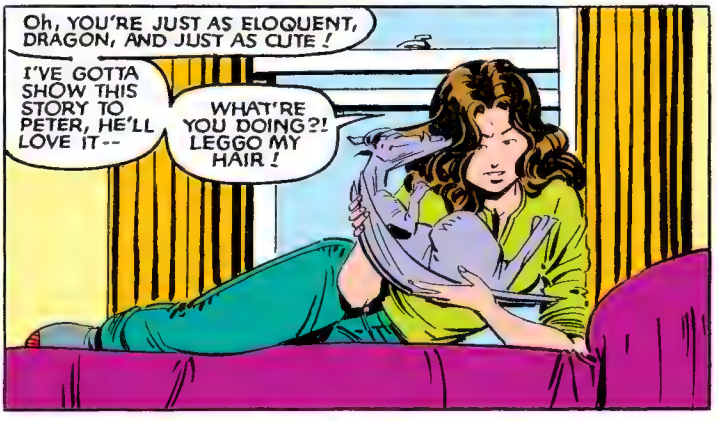

AM I CRAZY?
I LOVE MADELYNE-- I'M CERTAIN SHE FEELS THE SAME ABOUT ME-- I HAVEN'T FELT SO HAPPY, SO COMPLETE, SINCE JEAN DIED, LIKE I'VE FOUND A MISSING, ESSENTIAL PIECE OF MYSELF.
SO WHY CAN'T I SIMPLY ACCEPT WHAT IS AND HAVE DONE WITH IT?
WHY DO I KEEP QUESTIONING? WHY AM I TRYING TO DESTROY US?!
SHE'S THE SOLE SURVIVOR OF A PLANE CRASH THAT OCCURED AT THE PRECISE INSTANT JEAN DIED ON THE MOON. FROM THE MOMENT WE MET, SHE SEEMED TO KNOW ME BETTER THAN I DO MYSELF.
AND AS NEAR AS I CAN DISCOVER SHE HAS NO TRACEABLE EXISTANCE PRIOR TO THAT CRASH. WHENEVER I PRESS HER ABOUT IT, SHE CHANGES THE SUBJECT.
PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS, HANDSOME?
THEY WERE OF YOU, RED, AS ALWAYS.
YOU LOOK SO SAD, SCOTT-- BEEN TALKING TO GHOSTS?
I DO, FROM TIME TO TIME, CAN'T REALLY HELP MYSELF. THE PEOPLE FROM MY FLIGHT. I TRY TO EXPLAIN, TO APOLOGIZE. OCCASIONALLY, I SCREAM.
SO MANY DEAD. EVEN THOUGH IT WASN'T MY FAULT, I BLAME MYSELF. I CAN'T FORGET--BUT I ALSO CAN'T LET THEM CONTROL MY LIFE. SAME GOES FOR YOU...
... AND MY GHOSTS?
ONE IN PARTICULAR. NOT YOUR USUAL SORT OF ROMANTIC RIVAL, YOU MUST ADMIT.
NO REAL RIVAL AT ALL, SWEETHEART.
SCOTT, ABOUT YOUR DAD'S OFFER...
... PLEASE DON'T HOLD BACK ON MY ACCOUNT.
SUPPOSE I ASK YOU TO COME WITH ME.

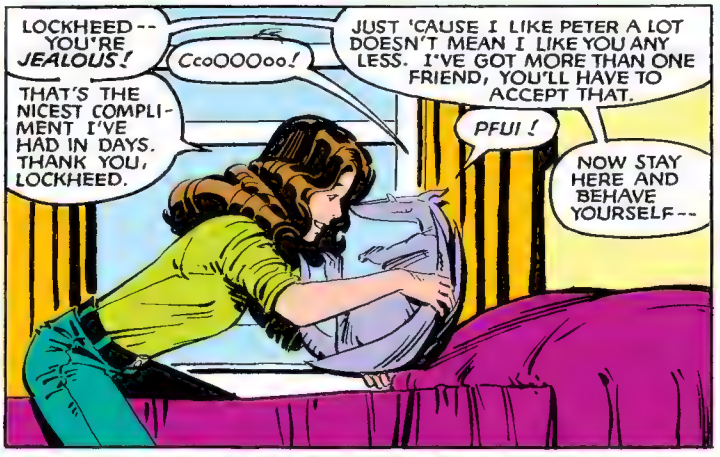

NORTHERN JAPAN--
--THE ANCESTRAL SEAT OF CLAN YASHIDA.
BOOM
<MARIKO!>*
*TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE --L.
<TURN AWAY, WOLVERINE-SAMA, YOU ARE NOT WELCOME HERE.>
<LEAVE THIS PLACE-- OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES.>
<MAKE ME, TOMO-SAN.>
<IIE!>
<AS LORD OF CLAN YASHIDA, I COMMAND YOU ALL TO LAY DOWN YOUR WEAPONS.>
<I WILL HAVE NO BLOOD SHED IN MY HOUSE.>
<THAT, DARLIN', REMAINS TO BE SEEN.>
<WE WERE TO BE MARRIED, MARIKO-- YOU SWORE YOU LOVED ME, WITH ALL YOUR HEART-- BUT ON OUR WEDDING DAY, YOU CALLED IT OFF.-- WHY?!>
<AS I TOLD YOU THEN, YOU ARE NOT WORTHY.>
<THAT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH!>
<AAAIEEE!>

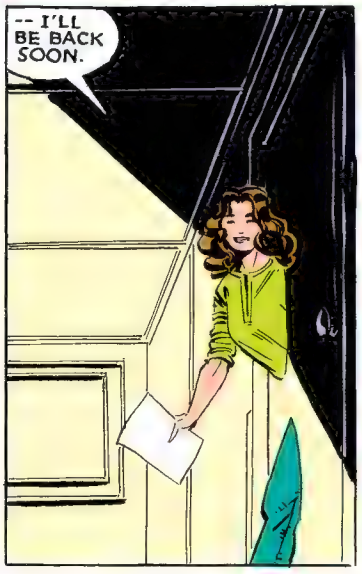

< IT IS THE ONLY ANSWER YOU DESERVE, MURDERER OF MY FATHER. >
< DO YOU REMEMBER THIS BLADE, MARIKO-- YOU GAVE IT TO ME-- THE "HONOR SWORD" OF CLAN YASHIDA. FOR 800 YEARS, IT HAS REPRESENTED ALL YOU ARE AND WISH TO BE-- THE SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL PERFECTION WE STRIVE FOR-- TO BE WORN, NOT BY THE LORD OF THE CLAN-- >
<-- BUT BY THE SAMURAI WHO BEST EXEMPLIFIES THOSE QUALITIES. >
< IF I'M NOT WORTHY OF YOU, LADY... >
<... I'M NOT WORTHY OF IT! >
< KENIUCHIO-SAN-- MOST ESTEEMED BROTHER-- WOULD YOU RETURN THAT SACRED BLADE TO ITS PROPER RESTING PLACE. >
< HEI, SISTER. >
HIS NAME IS KENIUCHIO HARADA, THE SILVER SAMURAI.
HIS AMBITION WAS TO TAKE MARIKO'S PLACE AS LORD. A FEW WEEKS AGO, HE TRIED TO KILL HER. WOLVERINE STOPPED HIM.
< I HAVE WON, LITTLE GAIGIN. ALL MY PAST CRIMES ARE FORGIVEN. MARIKO HAS NAMED ME HER HEIR. YOU HAVE NOTHING. >
< YOU ARE NOTHING. >
< WOLVERINE, MY LOVE IS FOR A MAN, NOT A BEAST CLAD IN HUMAN FORM. >
< LEAVE MY SIGHT... >
"<... MY HOUSE, MY LAND... >
"< FOREVER. >"

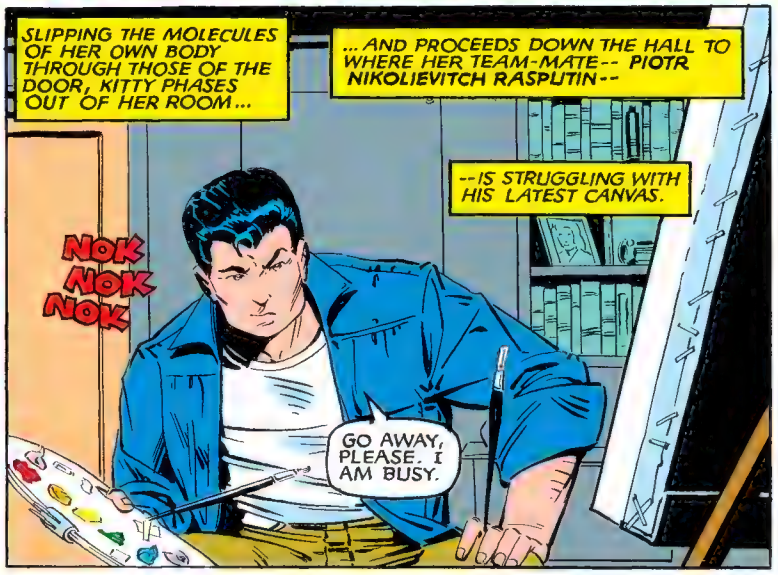
PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS-- AN HOUR'S DRIVE FROM NEW YORK CITY--
--WHEREIN RESIDES THE TEAM OF MUTANT SUPER-HEROES FOUNDED BY HIM, THE UNCANNY X-MEN...


...ONE OF WHOSE MEMBERS, KITTY PRYDE, IS SNEAKING A MID-AFTERNOON BREAK FROM HER ACADEMIC STUDIES.
.....
THAT'S TELLING LUKE AND LEIA, THREEPIO!
BOY, LOCKHEED, THESE LAHSBEES SURE HAVE A WAY WITH WORDS, Y'KNOW?
MNEH!
STAR WARS


Oh, YOU'RE JUST AS ELOQUENT, DRAGON, AND JUST AS CUTE!
I'VE GOTTA SHOW THIS STORY TO PETER, HE'LL LOVE IT--
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?! LEGGO MY HAIR!

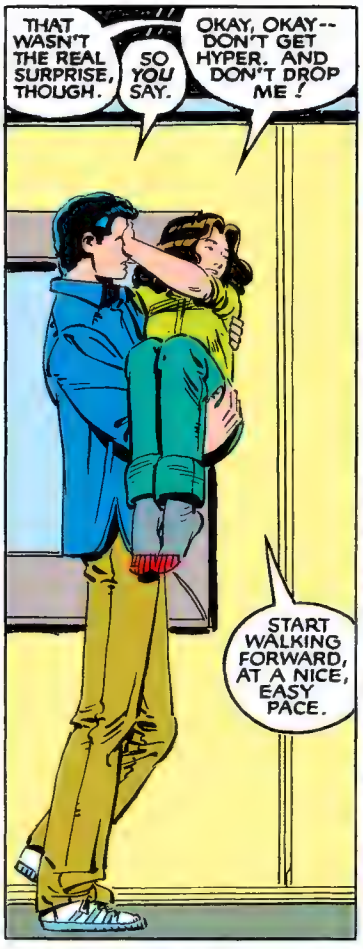

LOCKHEED-- YOU'RE JEALOUS!
CcoOOOoo!
JUST 'CAUSE I LIKE PETER A LOT DOESN'T MEAN I LIKE YOU ANY LESS. I'VE GOT MORE THAN ONE FRIEND, YOU'LL HAVE TO ACCEPT THAT.
THAT'S THE NICEST COMPLIMENT I'VE HAD IN DAYS. THANK YOU, LOCKHEED.
PFUI!
NOW STAY HERE AND BEHAVE YOURSELF--


-- I'LL BE BACK SOON.

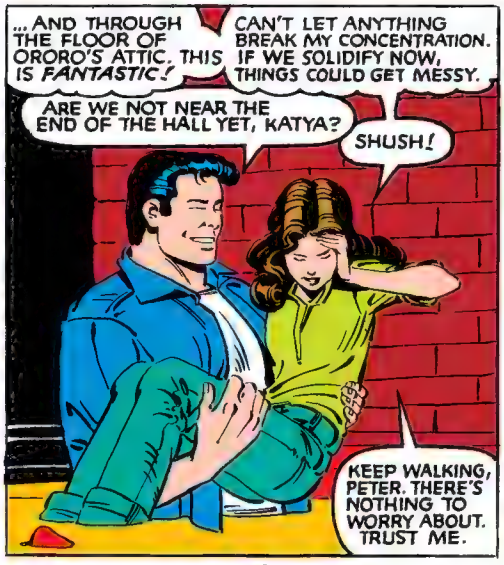

SLIPPING THE MOLECULES OF HER OWN BODY THROUGH THOSE OF THE DOOR, KITTY PHASES OUT OF HER ROOM...
...AND PROCEEDS DOWN THE HALL TO WHERE HER TEAM-MATE-- PIOTR NIKOLIEVITCH RASPUTIN--
--IS STRUGGLING WITH HIS LATEST CANVAS.
NOK NOK NOK
GO AWAY, PLEASE. I AM BUSY.

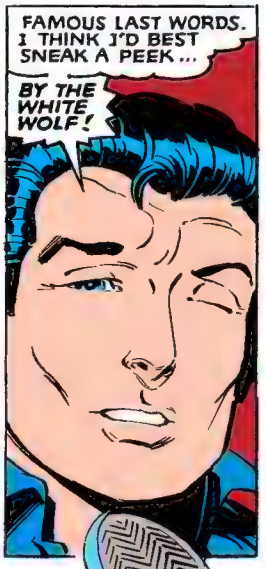
SO TAKE A BREAK, THAT'S WHAT I'M DOING.
I SHOULD HAVE LOCKED THE DOOR.
WOULDN'T HAVE HELPED. I CAN WALK THROUGH WALLS.
PAINTING GIVING YOU TROUBLE?
DA.
FOR A DIVERSION YOU INSIST IS SUPPOSED TO RELAX YOU, THIS SURE MAKES YOU AWFUL GRUMPY.
ONLY WHEN IT DOES NOT WORK, KATYA.
LOOKS FINE TO ME.
Umnh. IT IS NOT... RIGHT. THERE ARE FEELINGS-- PERCEPTIONS-- I WANTED SO BADLY TO CONVEY. THEY ARE IN MY HEAD, CLEAR AS CRYSTAL. BUT, HARD AS I TRY, I CANNOT GET THEM...
... INTO MY HANDS OR ONTO THIS CANVAS. IT IS VERY FRUSTRATING-- KATYA!
WHAT YOU NEED, SIR, IS A CHANGE OF SCENE.
I WOULD PREFER BEING LEFT ALONE.
TOUGH LUCK, I WON'T TAKE "NO" FOR AN ANSWER.
C'MON-- SOME PLAYTIME'LL DO US BOTH GOOD.
WHERE ARE WE GOING?
UPSTAIRS, TO ORORO'S ATTIC. I WAS GOING TO SHOW YOU THE LATEST "STAR WARS" COMIC, BUT THAT CAN WAIT. THIS IS IMPORTANT.
AND WHAT, PRAY TELL, IS "THIS"?
I CAN'T TELL YOU, IT'LL SPOIL THE SURPRISE. C'MON, PETER, STOP BEING SUCH AN OLD STICK IN THE MUD!
SORRY. MERELY A SENSE OF SELF-PRESERVATION.

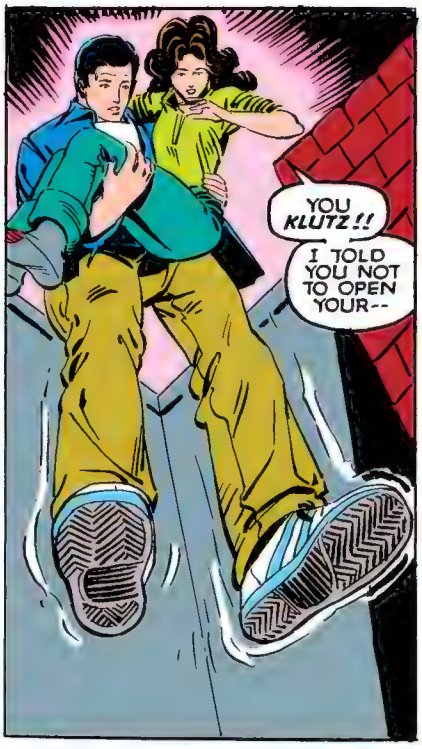
HA, HA, HA--VERY FUNNY.
FOR CERTAIN.
THE PHRASE, DUNCE, IS "FER SHURE."
STAND RIGHT HERE...
... AND CLOSE YOUR EYES.
I AM GOING TO REGRET THIS.
'CLOSE 'EM, BUSTER!
AN' COOL IT WITH THE WISECRACKS!
WHATEVER YOU SAY.
PERFECT.
WHAT A MAROON!
SURPRISE!!
?!?
MPGH NMI RIMMAZRKN--
--NRMMI RRMPHHN!!
KITTY!?!
I'M ANGRY!
YOU'RE BLUSHING!
IT WAS WORTH IT!
BUT DON'T BE ANGRY, IT WASN'T INTENTIONAL. SPUR OF THE MOMENT IMPULSE, I COULDN'T HELP MYSELF. HONEST!


THAT WASN'T THE REAL SURPRISE, THOUGH.
SO YOU SAY.
OKAY, OKAY-- DON'T GET HYPER. AND DON'T DROP ME!
START WALKING FORWARD, AT A NICE, EASY PACE.

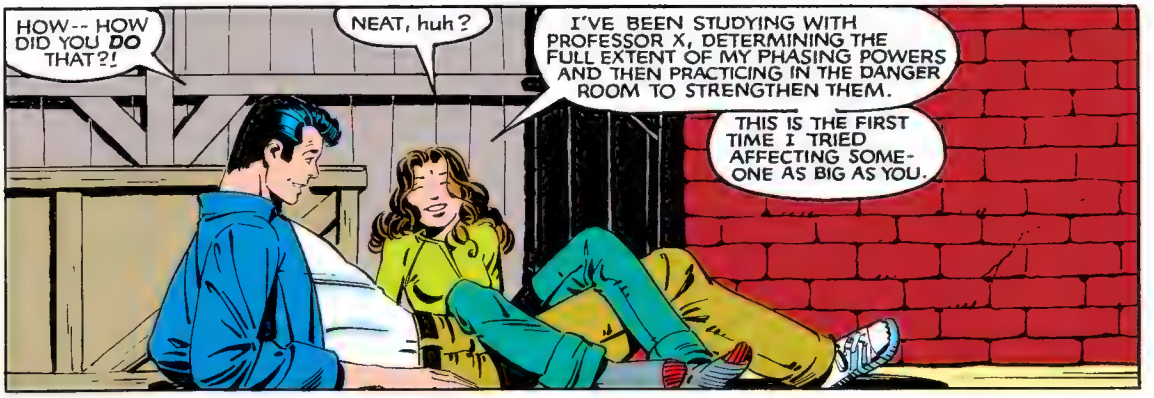
IT'S WORKING! WHEN I'M HOLDING ONTO SOMETHING OR SOMEONE, I CAN EXTEND MY PHASING POWER TO AFFECT THEM, TOO! I'VE GOT PETER WALKING ON AIR...

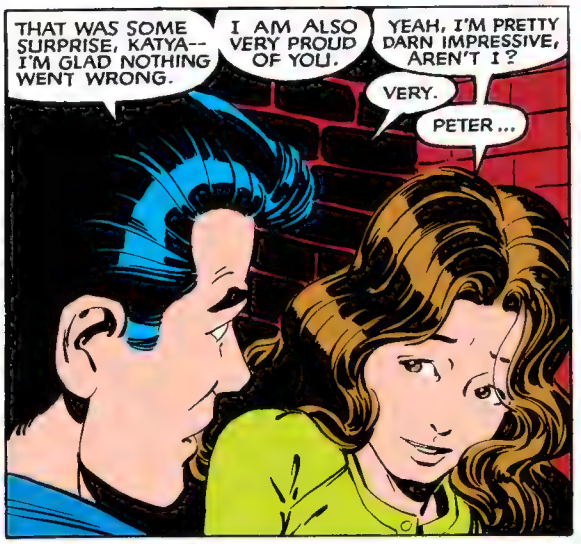

...AND THROUGH THE FLOOR OF ORORO'S ATTIC. THIS IS FANTASTIC!
CAN'T LET ANYTHING BREAK MY CONCENTRATION. IF WE SOLIDIFY NOW, THINGS COULD GET MESSY.
ARE WE NOT NEAR THE END OF THE HALL YET, KATYA?
SHUSH!
KEEP WALKING, PETER. THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT. TRUST ME.


FAMOUS LAST WORDS. I THINK I'D BEST SNEAK A PEEK...
BY THE WHITE WOLF!


YOU KLUTZ!!
I TOLD YOU NOT TO OPEN YOUR--

--EYYEES!
THUMP!

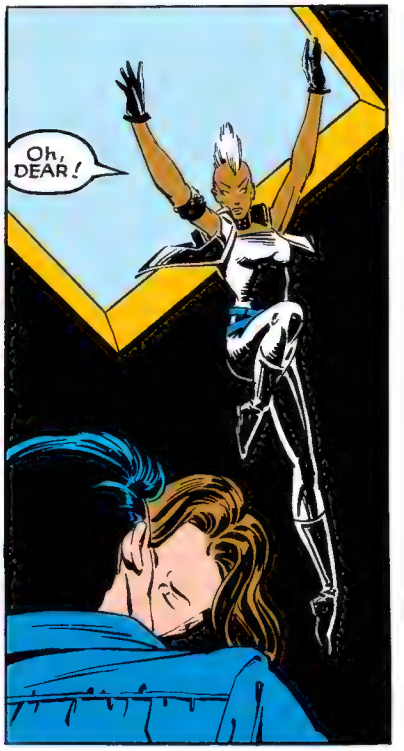

HOW-- HOW DID YOU DO THAT?!
NEAT, huh?
I'VE BEEN STUDYING WITH PROFESSOR X, DETERMINING THE FULL EXTENT OF MY PHASING POWERS AND THEN PRACTICING IN THE DANGER ROOM TO STRENGTHEN THEM.
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I TRIED AFFECTING SOMEONE AS BIG AS YOU.

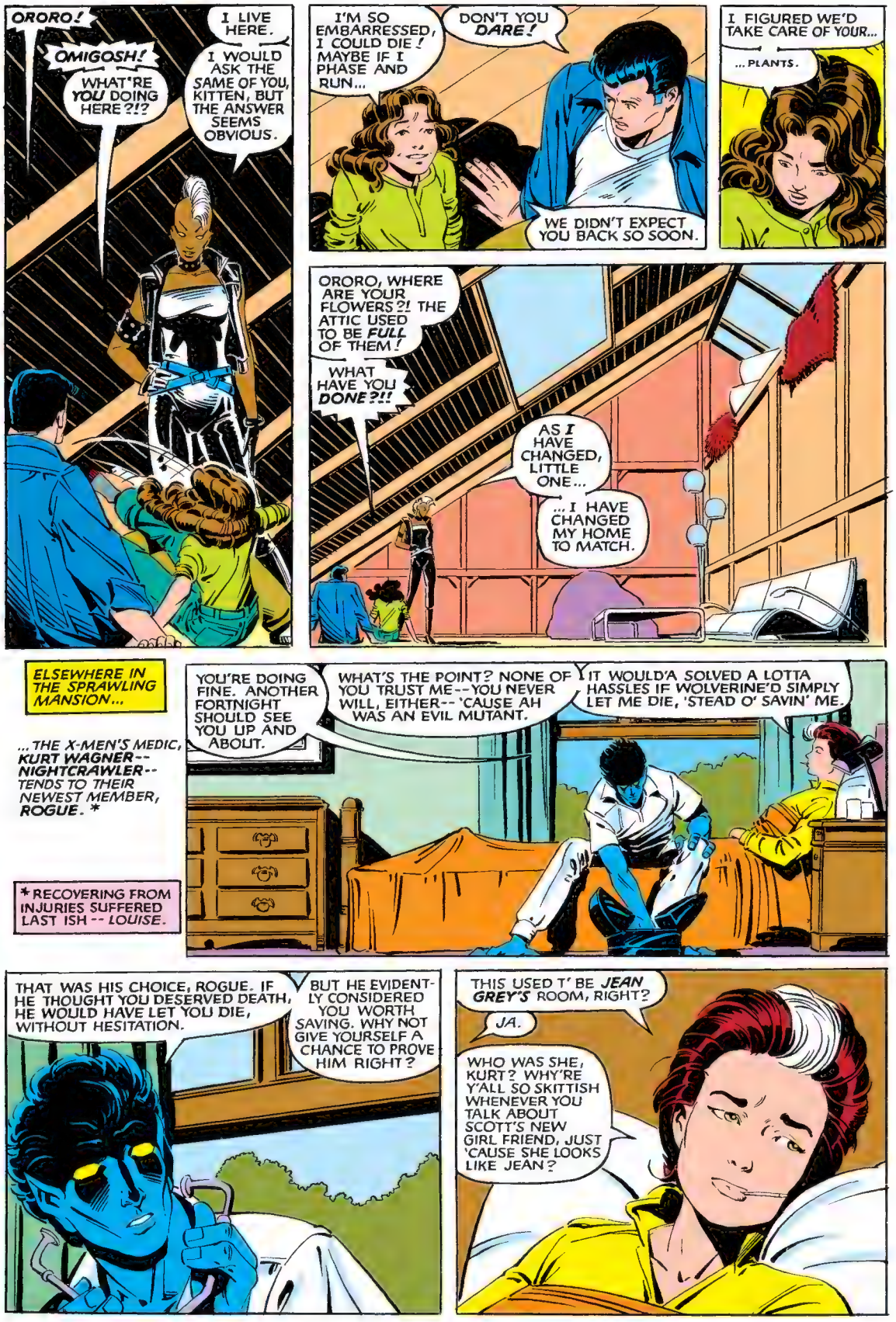

THAT WAS SOME SURPRISE, KATYA-- I'M GLAD NOTHING WENT WRONG.
I AM ALSO VERY PROUD OF YOU.
YEAH, I'M PRETTY DARN IMPRESSIVE, AREN'T I?
VERY.
PETER...

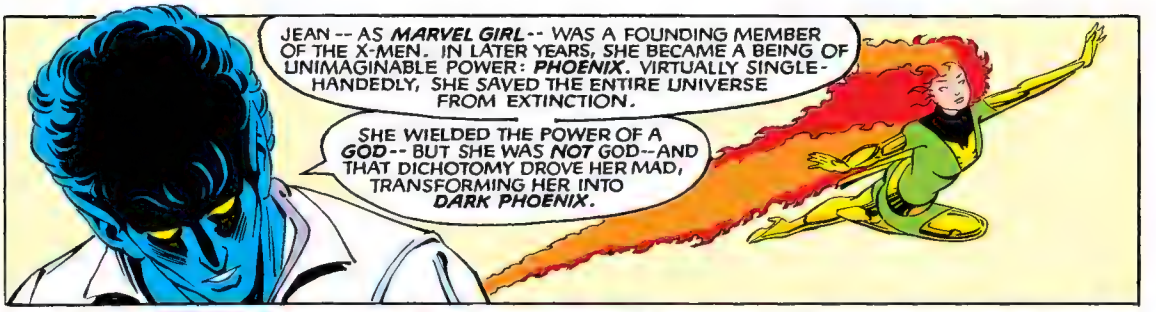
SHOULDN'T WE, ah, BE WATERING ORORO'S PLANTS? THAT IS WHY WE CAME UP HERE...
THEY CAN WAIT A LITTLE LONGER.
YOU LOOK SCARED.
I AM SCARED. I DON'T CARE.

OUTSIDE...

AHA! VISITORS IN MY ATTIC-- HOW NICE!


Oh, DEAR!


ORORO!
I LIVE HERE.
OMIGOSH!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE?!?
I WOULD ASK THE SAME OF YOU, KITTEN, BUT THE ANSWER SEEMS OBVIOUS.
I'M SO EMBARRESSED, I COULD DIE! MAYBE IF I PHASE AND RUN...
DON'T YOU DARE!
WE DIDN'T EXPECT YOU BACK SO SOON.
I FIGURED WE'D TAKE CARE OF YOUR...
...PLANTS.
ORORO, WHERE ARE YOUR FLOWERS?! THE ATTIC USED TO BE FULL OF THEM!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!!
AS I HAVE CHANGED, LITTLE ONE...
...I HAVE CHANGED MY HOME TO MATCH.
ELSEWHERE IN THE SPRAWLING MANSION...
...THE X-MEN'S MEDIC, KURT WAGNER--NIGHTCRAWLER--TENDS TO THEIR NEWEST MEMBER, ROGUE. *
*RECOVERING FROM INJURIES SUFFERED LAST ISH -- LOUISE.
YOU'RE DOING FINE. ANOTHER FORTNIGHT SHOULD SEE YOU UP AND ABOUT.
WHAT'S THE POINT? NONE OF YOU TRUST ME--YOU NEVER WILL, EITHER-- 'CAUSE AH WAS AN EVIL MUTANT.
IT WOULD'A SOLVED A LOTTA HASSLES IF WOLVERINE'D SIMPLY LET ME DIE, 'STEAD O' SAVIN' ME.
THAT WAS HIS CHOICE, ROGUE. IF HE THOUGHT YOU DESERVED DEATH, HE WOULD HAVE LET YOU DIE, WITHOUT HESITATION.
BUT HE EVIDENTLY CONSIDERED YOU WORTH SAVING. WHY NOT GIVE YOURSELF A CHANCE TO PROVE HIM RIGHT?
THIS USED T' BE JEAN GREY'S ROOM, RIGHT?
JA.
WHO WAS SHE, KURT? WHY'RE Y'ALL SO SKITTISH WHENEVER YOU TALK ABOUT SCOTT'S NEW GIRL FRIEND, JUST 'CAUSE SHE LOOKS LIKE JEAN?


JEAN -- AS MARVEL GIRL -- WAS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE X-MEN. IN LATER YEARS, SHE BECAME A BEING OF UNIMAGINABLE POWER: PHOENIX. VIRTUALLY SINGLE-HANDEDLY, SHE SAVED THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE FROM EXTINCTION.
SHE WIELDED THE POWER OF A GOD -- BUT SHE WAS NOT GOD -- AND THAT DICHOTOMY DROVE HER MAD, TRANSFORMING HER INTO DARK PHOENIX.

"IN HER RAMPAGE, SHE DESTROYED AN INHABITED STAR SYSTEM -- FIVE BILLION LIVES.
"AFTER THAT, IN A BURST OF SANITY, SHE REALIZED THERE WAS BUT ONE WAY OUT...
"...TO STOP THIS EVIL SIDE OF HERSELF."

AND SO, BY HER OWN HAND -- FOR THE SAKE OF ALL CREATION --
--SHE DIED.

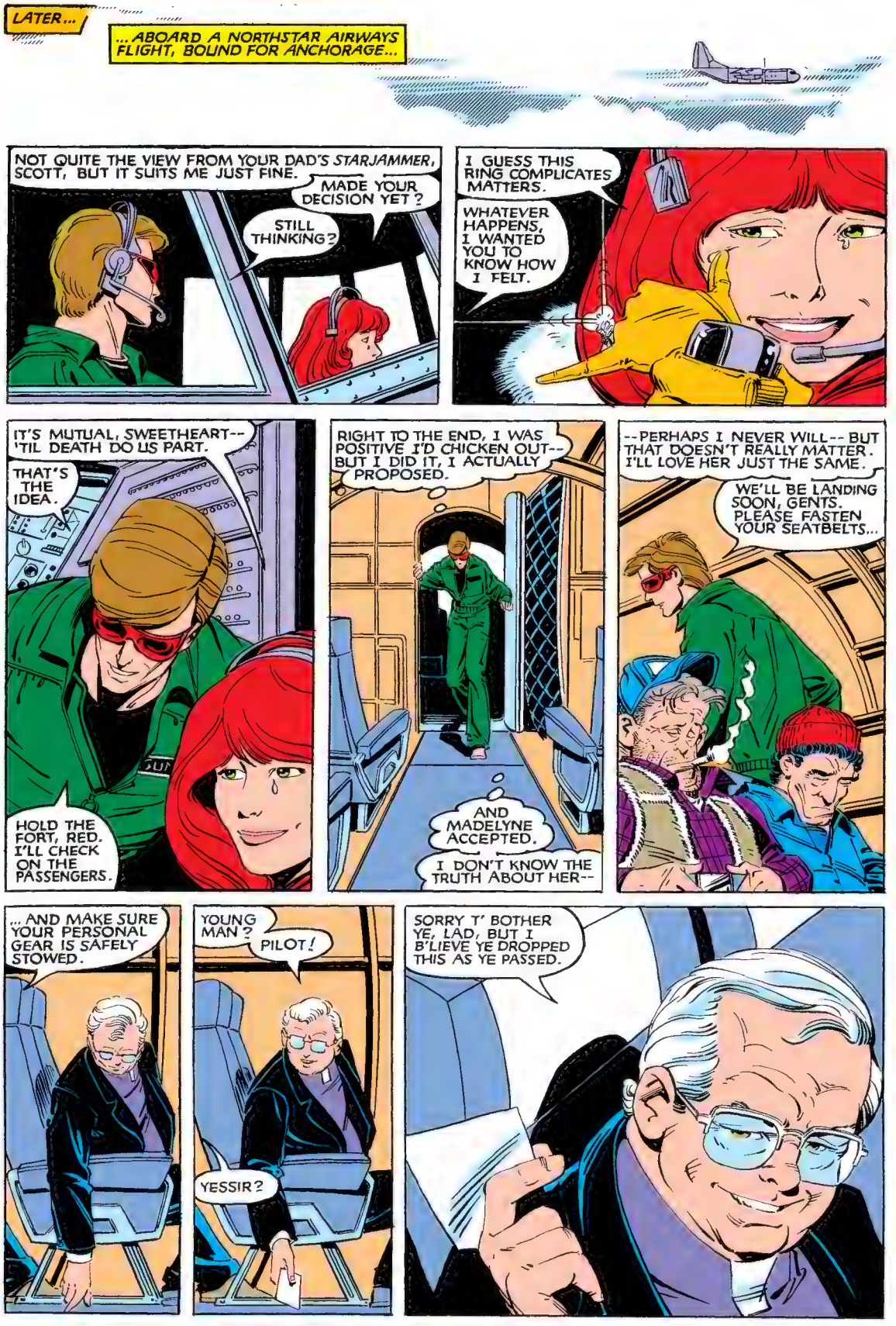
BUT WAS THAT THE STORY'S END?
PHOENIX WAS BORN WHEN JEAN DIED AND THEN RESURRECTED HERSELF. IF DONE ONCE, WHY NOT AGAIN?
STORM SAW THE PHOENIX EFFECT -- A GIANT BIRD OF FIRE -- IN TOKYO, ON THE EVE OF OUR INTRODUCTION TO MADELYNE. COINCIDENCE -- OR PORTENT?
SUPPOSE SHE IS PHOENIX REBORN -- WHAT THEN? DO SHE AND SCOTT NOT DESERVE A SECOND CHANCE AT HAPPINESS? AND IF IT CAME TO A FIGHT -- EVEN WITH EVERY X-MAN AGAINST HER --

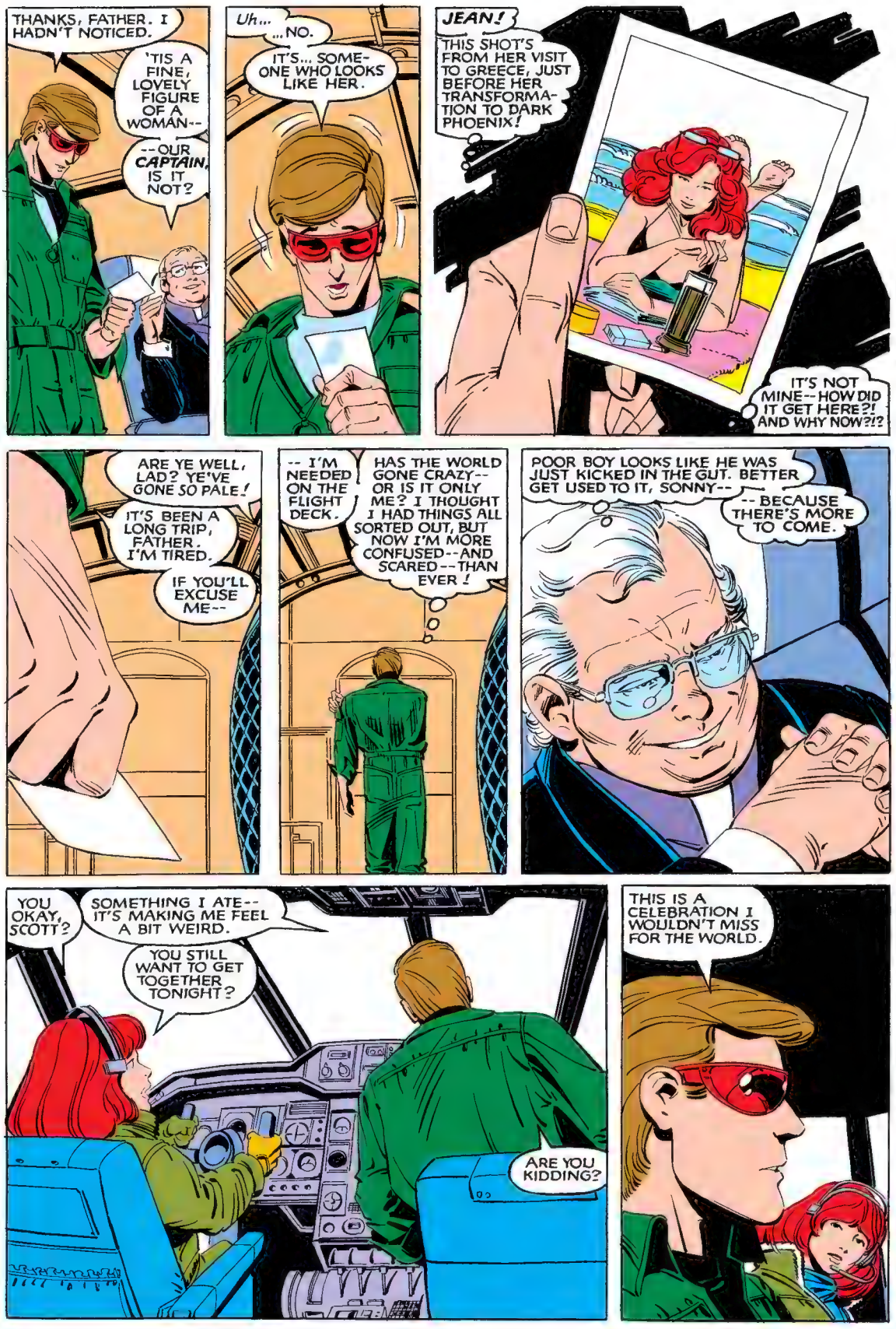
-- I TRULY DOUBT WE'D WIN.
ACH, I HAVE NEVER FELT SO ALONE.
I WISH AMANDA WERE HERE.

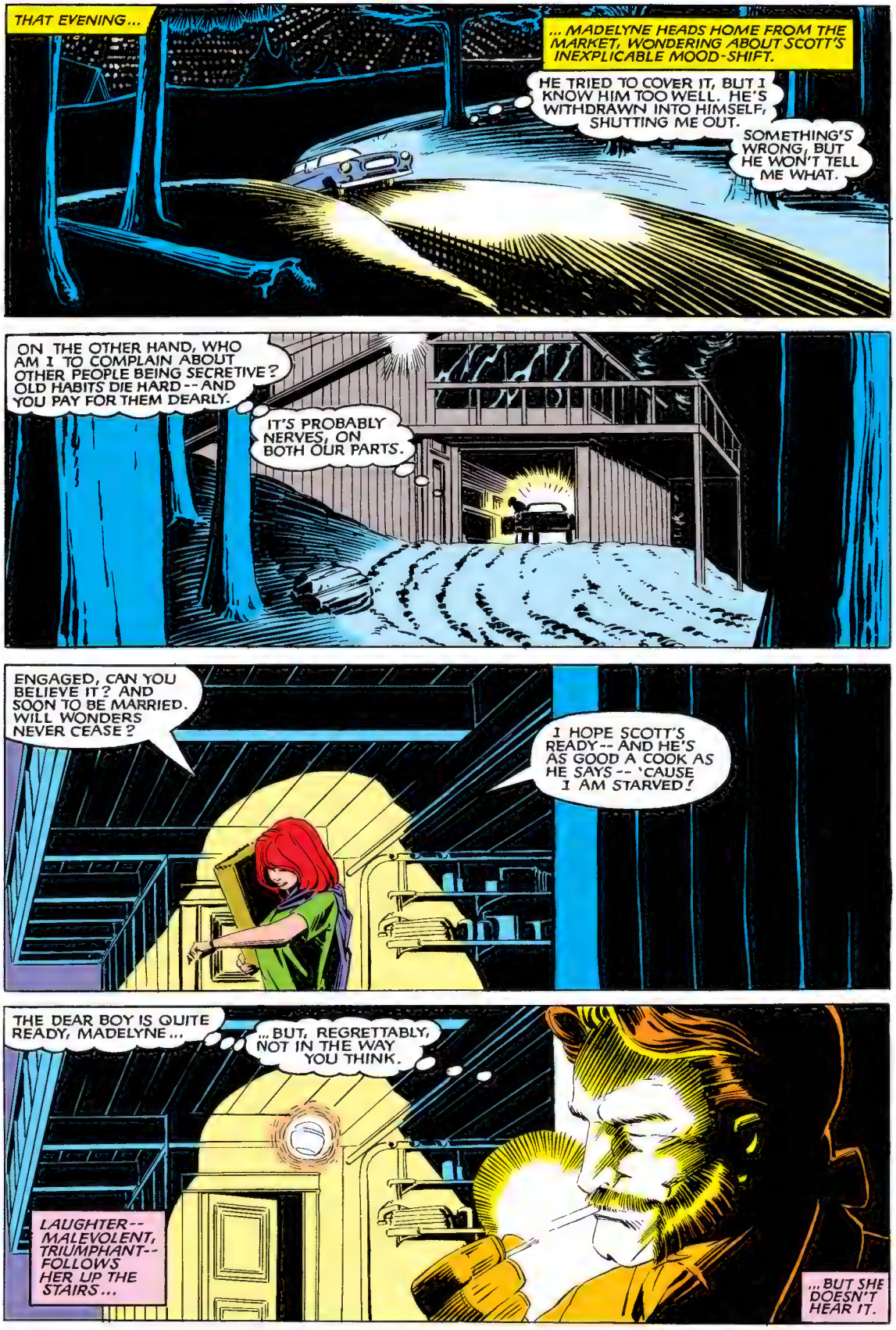
I COULD USE HER LAUGHTER -- eh?

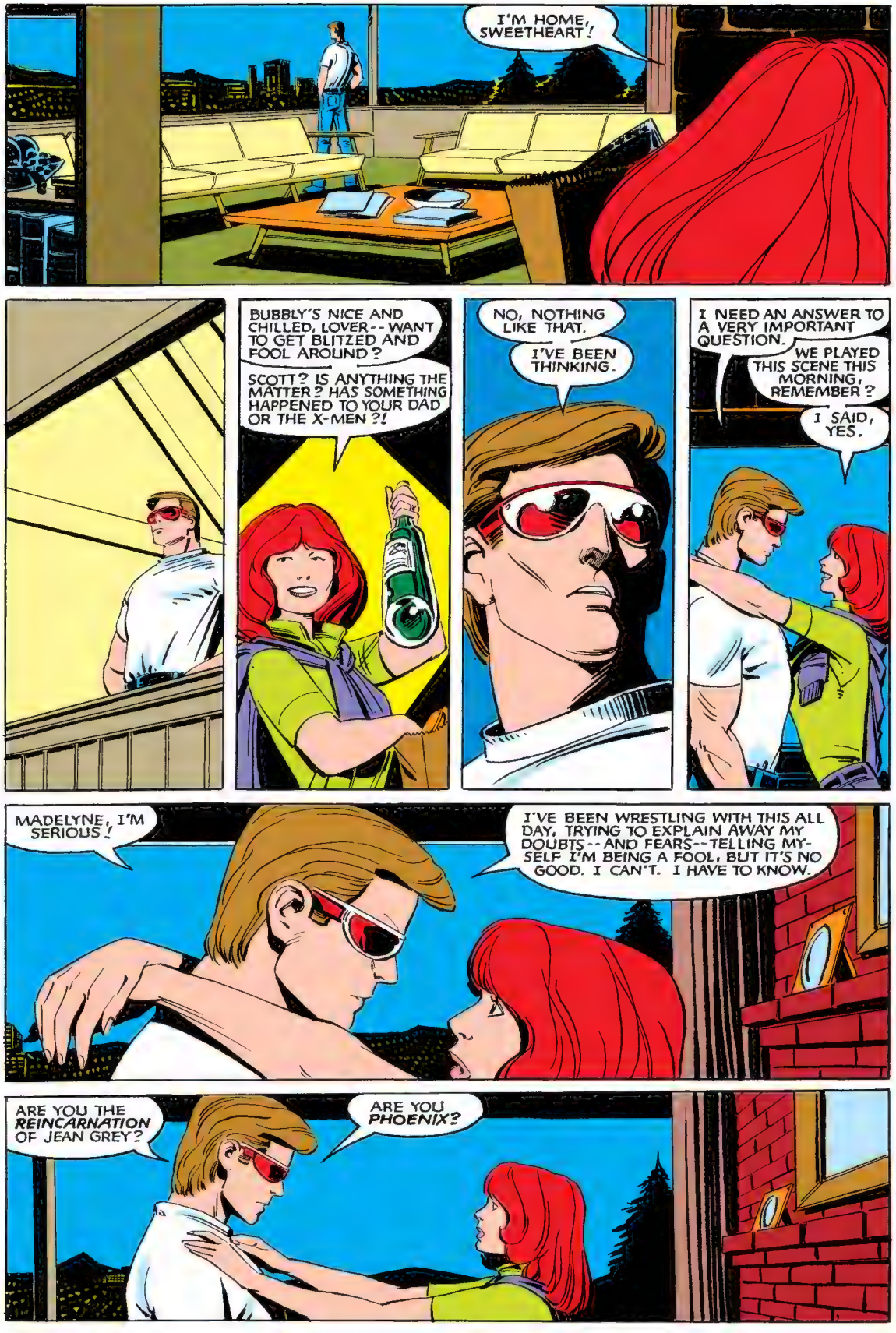
WAS IST?
HA!!

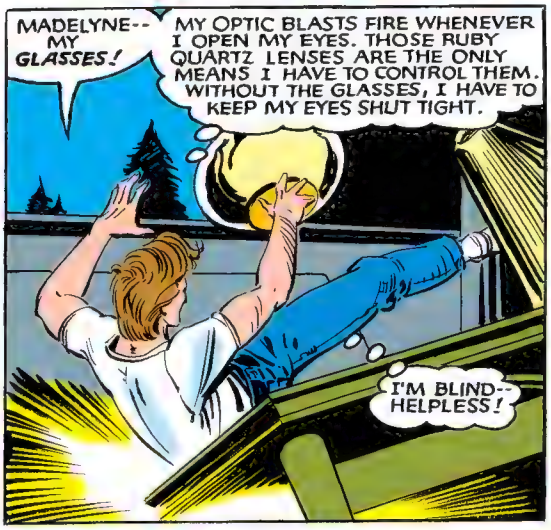
I know you'd prefer the real thing darling but... XXOOXX A

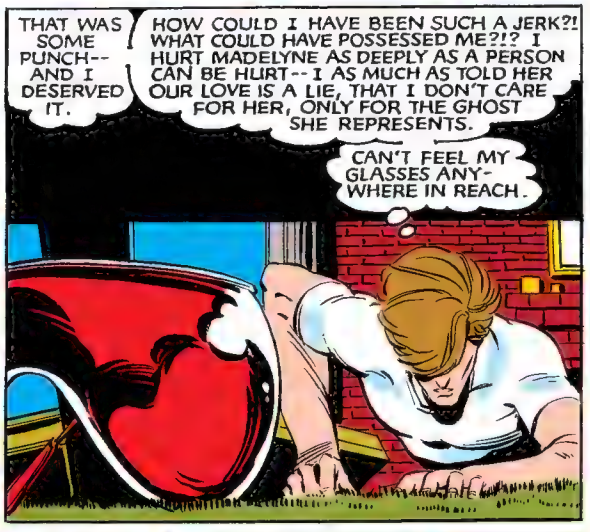

LATER...
...ABOARD A NORTHSTAR AIRWAYS FLIGHT, BOUND FOR ANCHORAGE...
NOT QUITE THE VIEW FROM YOUR DAD'S STARJAMMER, SCOTT, BUT IT SUITS ME JUST FINE.
MADE YOUR DECISION YET?
STILL THINKING?
I GUESS THIS RING COMPLICATES MATTERS.
WHATEVER HAPPENS, I WANTED YOU TO KNOW HOW I FELT.
IT'S MUTUAL, SWEETHEART-- 'TIL DEATH DO US PART.
THAT'S THE IDEA.
HOLD THE FORT, RED. I'LL CHECK ON THE PASSENGERS.
RIGHT TO THE END, I WAS POSITIVE I'D CHICKEN OUT-- BUT I DID IT, I ACTUALLY PROPOSED.
AND MADELYNE ACCEPTED.
I DON'T KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT HER--
--PERHAPS I NEVER WILL-- BUT THAT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER. I'LL LOVE HER JUST THE SAME.
WE'LL BE LANDING SOON, GENTS. PLEASE FASTEN YOUR SEATBELTS...
... AND MAKE SURE YOUR PERSONAL GEAR IS SAFELY STOWED.
YOUNG MAN?
PILOT!
YESSIR?
SORRY T' BOTHER YE, LAD, BUT I B'LIEVE YE DROPPED THIS AS YE PASSED.


THANKS, FATHER. I HADN'T NOTICED.
'TIS A FINE, LOVELY FIGURE OF A WOMAN--
--OUR CAPTAIN, IS IT NOT?
Uh...
...NO.
IT'S... SOMEONE WHO LOOKS LIKE HER.
JEAN!
THIS SHOT'S FROM HER VISIT TO GREECE, JUST BEFORE HER TRANSFORMATION TO DARK PHOENIX!
IT'S NOT MINE--HOW DID IT GET HERE?! AND WHY NOW?!?
ARE YE WELL, LAD? YE'VE GONE SO PALE!
IT'S BEEN A LONG TRIP, FATHER. I'M TIRED.
IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME--
-- I'M NEEDED ON THE FLIGHT DECK.
HAS THE WORLD GONE CRAZY--OR IS IT ONLY ME? I THOUGHT I HAD THINGS ALL SORTED OUT, BUT NOW I'M MORE CONFUSED--AND SCARED--THAN EVER!
POOR BOY LOOKS LIKE HE WAS JUST KICKED IN THE GUT. BETTER GET USED TO IT, SONNY--
-- BECAUSE THERE'S MORE TO COME.
YOU OKAY, SCOTT?
SOMETHING I ATE--IT'S MAKING ME FEEL A BIT WEIRD.
YOU STILL WANT TO GET TOGETHER TONIGHT?
ARE YOU KIDDING?
THIS IS A CELEBRATION I WOULDN'T MISS FOR THE WORLD.


THAT EVENING...
... MADELYNE HEADS HOME FROM THE MARKET, WONDERING ABOUT SCOTT'S INEXPLICABLE MOOD-SHIFT.
HE TRIED TO COVER IT, BUT I KNOW HIM TOO WELL. HE'S WITHDRAWN INTO HIMSELF, SHUTTING ME OUT.
SOMETHING'S WRONG, BUT HE WON'T TELL ME WHAT.
ON THE OTHER HAND, WHO AM I TO COMPLAIN ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE BEING SECRETIVE? OLD HABITS DIE HARD -- AND YOU PAY FOR THEM DEARLY.
IT'S PROBABLY NERVES, ON BOTH OUR PARTS.
ENGAGED, CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? AND SOON TO BE MARRIED. WILL WONDERS NEVER CEASE?
I HOPE SCOTT'S READY -- AND HE'S AS GOOD A COOK AS HE SAYS -- 'CAUSE I AM STARVED!
THE DEAR BOY IS QUITE READY, MADELYNE...
... BUT, REGRETTABLY, NOT IN THE WAY YOU THINK.
LAUGHTER -- MALEVOLENT, TRIUMPHANT -- FOLLOWS HER UP THE STAIRS...
... BUT SHE DOESN'T HEAR IT.


I'M HOME, SWEETHEART!
BUBBLY'S NICE AND CHILLED, LOVER--WANT TO GET BLITZED AND FOOL AROUND?
SCOTT? IS ANYTHING THE MATTER? HAS SOMETHING HAPPENED TO YOUR DAD OR THE X-MEN?!
NO, NOTHING LIKE THAT.
I'VE BEEN THINKING.
I NEED AN ANSWER TO A VERY IMPORTANT QUESTION.
WE PLAYED THIS SCENE THIS MORNING, REMEMBER?
I SAID, YES.
MADELYNE, I'M SERIOUS!
I'VE BEEN WRESTLING WITH THIS ALL DAY, TRYING TO EXPLAIN AWAY MY DOUBTS--AND FEARS--TELLING MYSELF I'M BEING A FOOL, BUT IT'S NO GOOD. I CAN'T. I HAVE TO KNOW.
ARE YOU THE *REINCARNATION* OF JEAN GREY?
ARE YOU *PHOENIX?*

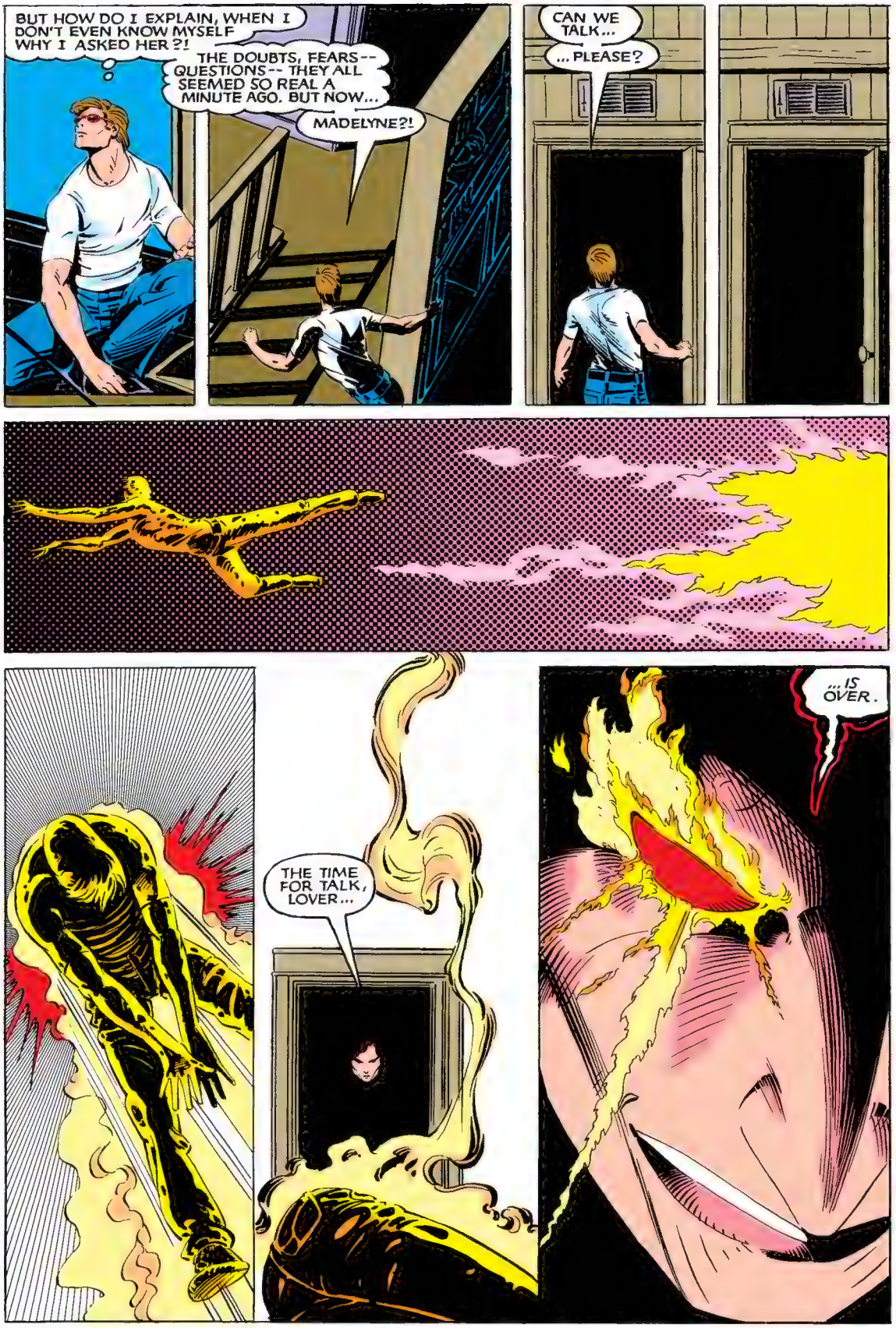

MADELYNE-- MY GLASSES!
MY OPTIC BLASTS FIRE WHENEVER I OPEN MY EYES. THOSE RUBY QUARTZ LENSES ARE THE ONLY MEANS I HAVE TO CONTROL THEM. WITHOUT THE GLASSES, I HAVE TO KEEP MY EYES SHUT TIGHT.
I'M BLIND-- HELPLESS!


THAT WAS SOME PUNCH-- AND I DESERVED IT.
HOW COULD I HAVE BEEN SUCH A JERK?! WHAT COULD HAVE POSSESSED ME?!? I HURT MADELYNE AS DEEPLY AS A PERSON CAN BE HURT-- I AS MUCH AS TOLD HER OUR LOVE IS A LIE, THAT I DON'T CARE FOR HER, ONLY FOR THE GHOST SHE REPRESENTS.
CAN'T FEEL MY GLASSES ANY-WHERE IN REACH.

CAN'T WASTE TIME LOOKING FOR THEM, EITHER.

GOOD THING I ALWAYS CARRY AN EMERGENCY SET OF SPARES. I'VE GOT TO MAKE SURE THEY'RE IN PLACE BE-FORE I OPEN MY EYES, EVEN A FRACTION...

...OR I COULD WRECK MADELYNE'S HOUSE...
...AS EASILY AS I HAVE HER LIFE.


BUT HOW DO I EXPLAIN, WHEN I DON'T EVEN KNOW MYSELF WHY I ASKED HER?!
THE DOUBTS, FEARS-- QUESTIONS-- THEY ALL SEEMED SO REAL A MINUTE AGO. BUT NOW...
MADELYNE?!
CAN WE TALK...
...PLEASE?
THE TIME FOR TALK, LOVER...
...IS OVER.

TO BE
CONCLUDED

MARVEL
20th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!
X-MEN
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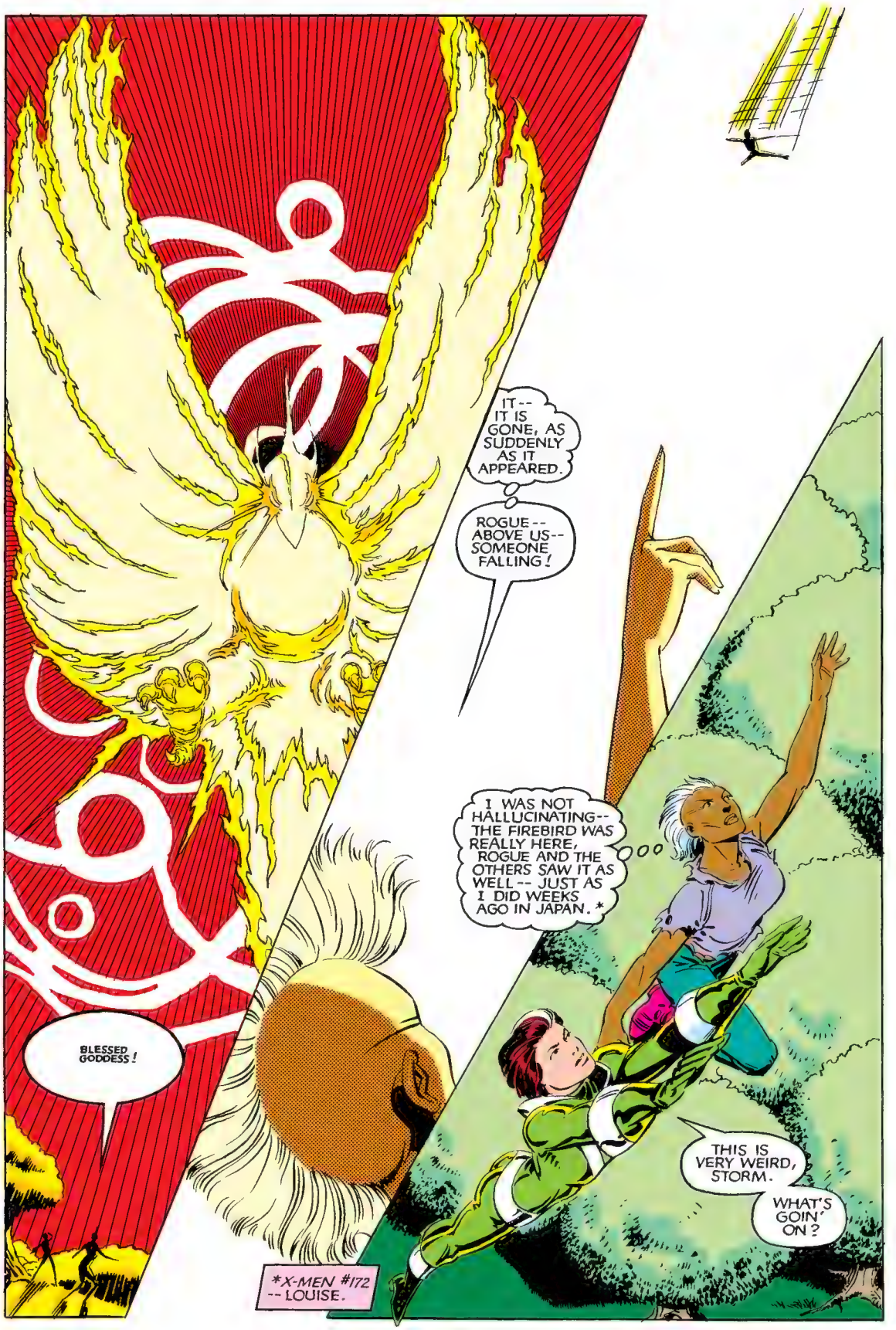
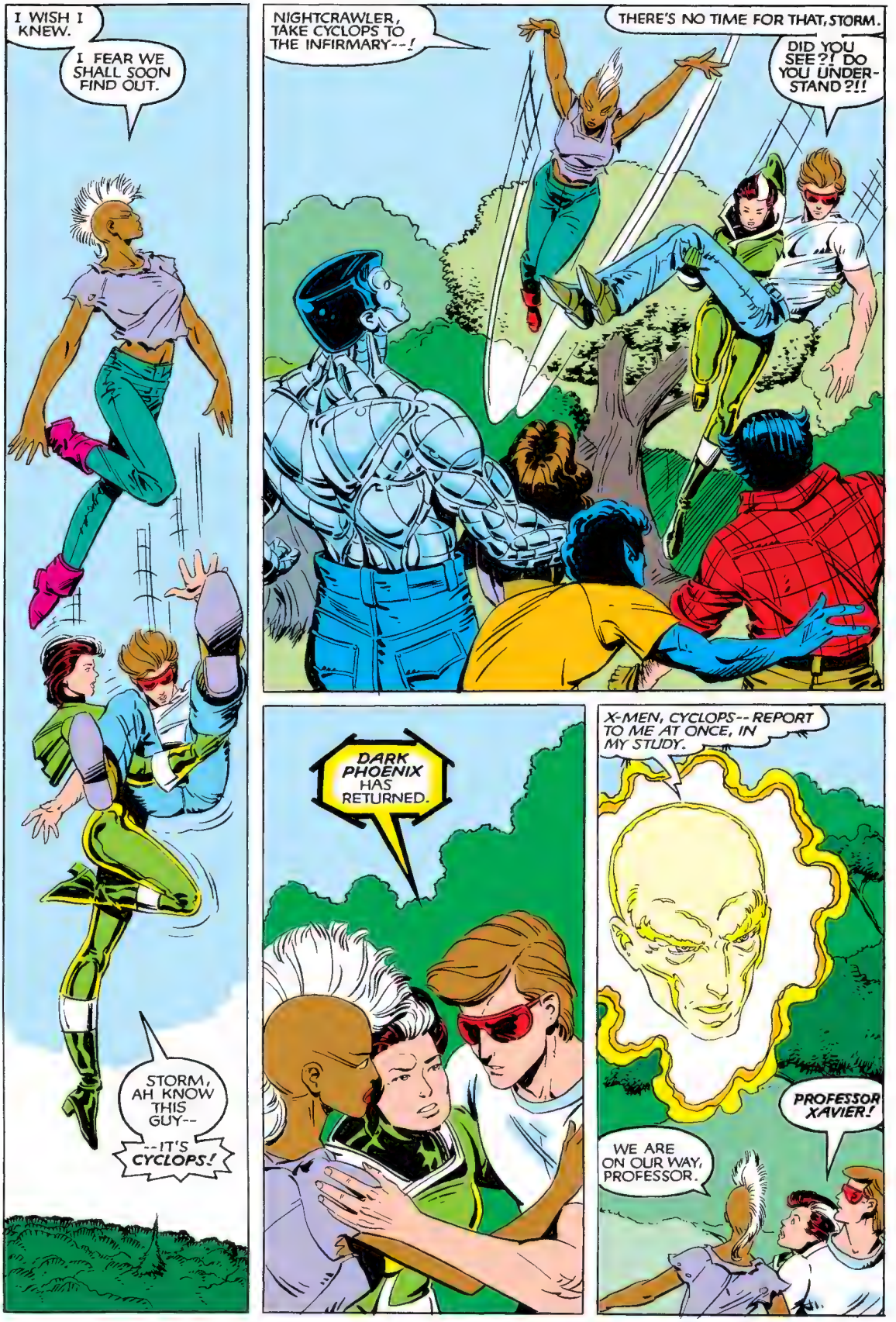
TWENTY YEARS AGO, MORE OR LESS, STAN LEE AND JACK KIRBY CREATED THE UNCANNY X-MEN.
A LOT HAS CHANGED SINCE THEN.
CUT AWAY, WOLVERINE! I HAVE THE TREE.
BE CAREFUL, PETER! IT'S AWFUL HEAVY.
IN MY ARMORED FORM, KATYA, I AM SOLID STEEL. I AM IN NO DANGER.
BUT YOU, KIDDO, ARE IN THE FLAMIN' WAY! EITHER MAKE YOURSELF USEFUL, OR SCOOT!
TIMBER!
WHY SO SAD, STORM? THE TREE WAS AS GOOD AS DEAD FROM DISEASE.
ONCE, ROGUE, I BELIEVED MYSELF THE CARETAKER OF ALL LIVING THINGS. I SHOULD HAVE SENSED ITS ILLNESS...
... BUT I DID NOT.
WHY SUCH A BIG PRODUCTION, THOUGH? WOULDN'T IT HAVE BEEN EASIER AN' FASTER FOR ME OR COLOSSUS T' PULVERIZE THE TREE?
MORE EFFICIENT. LESS FUN.
THIS WAY, WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXERCISE BOTH POWERS AND TEAM-WORK.
SUGAH, YOU'RE STARTIN' T' SOUND LIKE PROFESSOR X--
HEY!


BLESSED GODDESS!
IT-- IT IS GONE, AS SUDDENLY AS IT APPEARED.
ROGUE-- ABOVE US-- SOMEONE FALLING!
I WAS NOT HALLUCINATING-- THE FIREBIRD WAS REALLY HERE, ROGUE AND THE OTHERS SAW IT AS WELL-- JUST AS I DID WEEKS AGO IN JAPAN.*
THIS IS VERY WEIRD, STORM.
WHAT'S GOIN' ON?
*X-MEN #172 -- LOUISE.

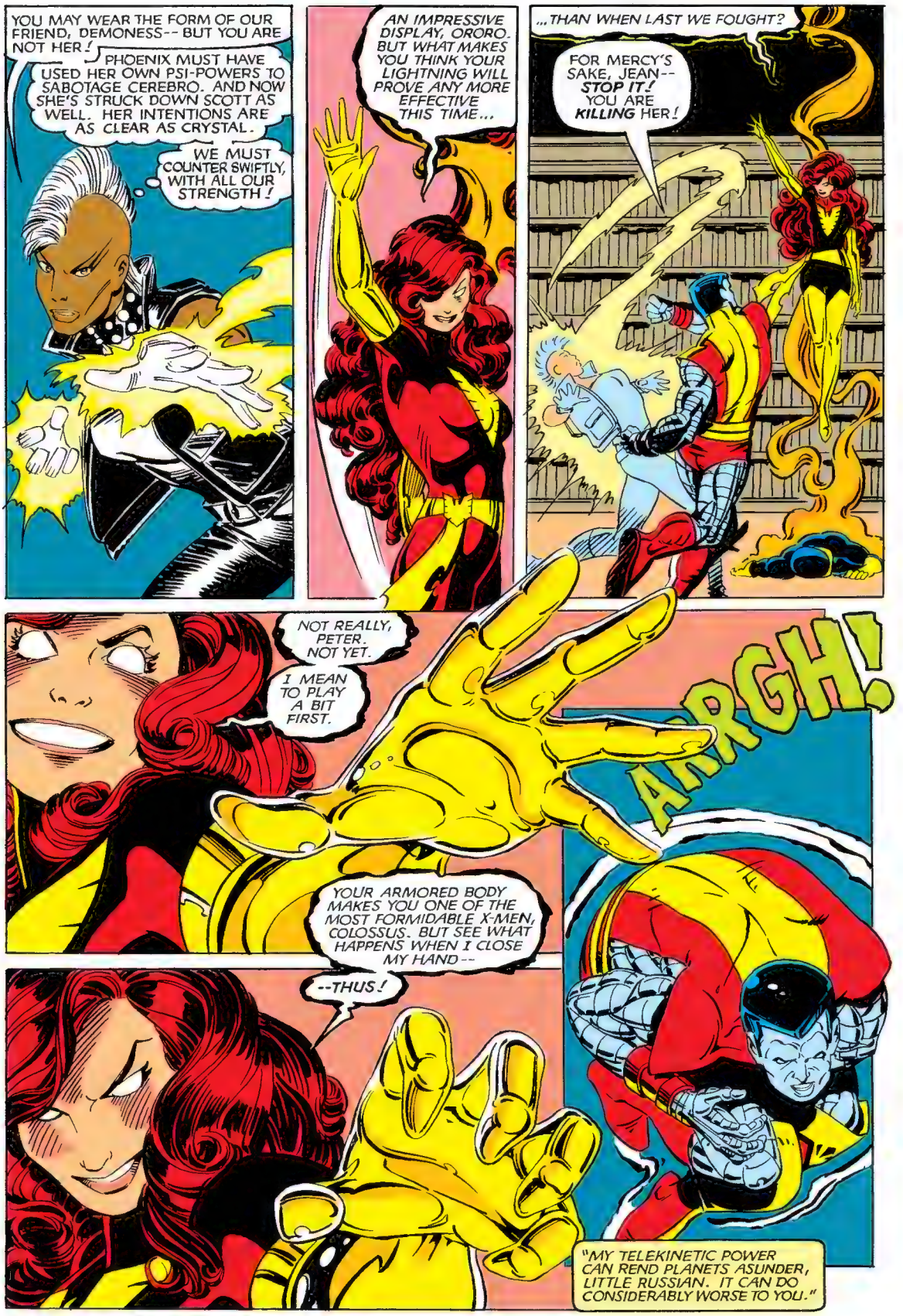

I WISH I KNEW.
I FEAR WE SHALL SOON FIND OUT.
STORM, AH KNOW THIS GUY--
--IT'S CYCLOPS!
NIGHTCRAWLER, TAKE CYCLOPS TO THE INFIRMARY--!
THERE'S NO TIME FOR THAT, STORM.
DID YOU SEE?! DO YOU UNDERSTAND?!!
DARK PHOENIX HAS RETURNED.
X-MEN, CYCLOPS-- REPORT TO ME AT ONCE, IN MY STUDY.
PROFESSOR XAVIER!
WE ARE ON OUR WAY, PROFESSOR.

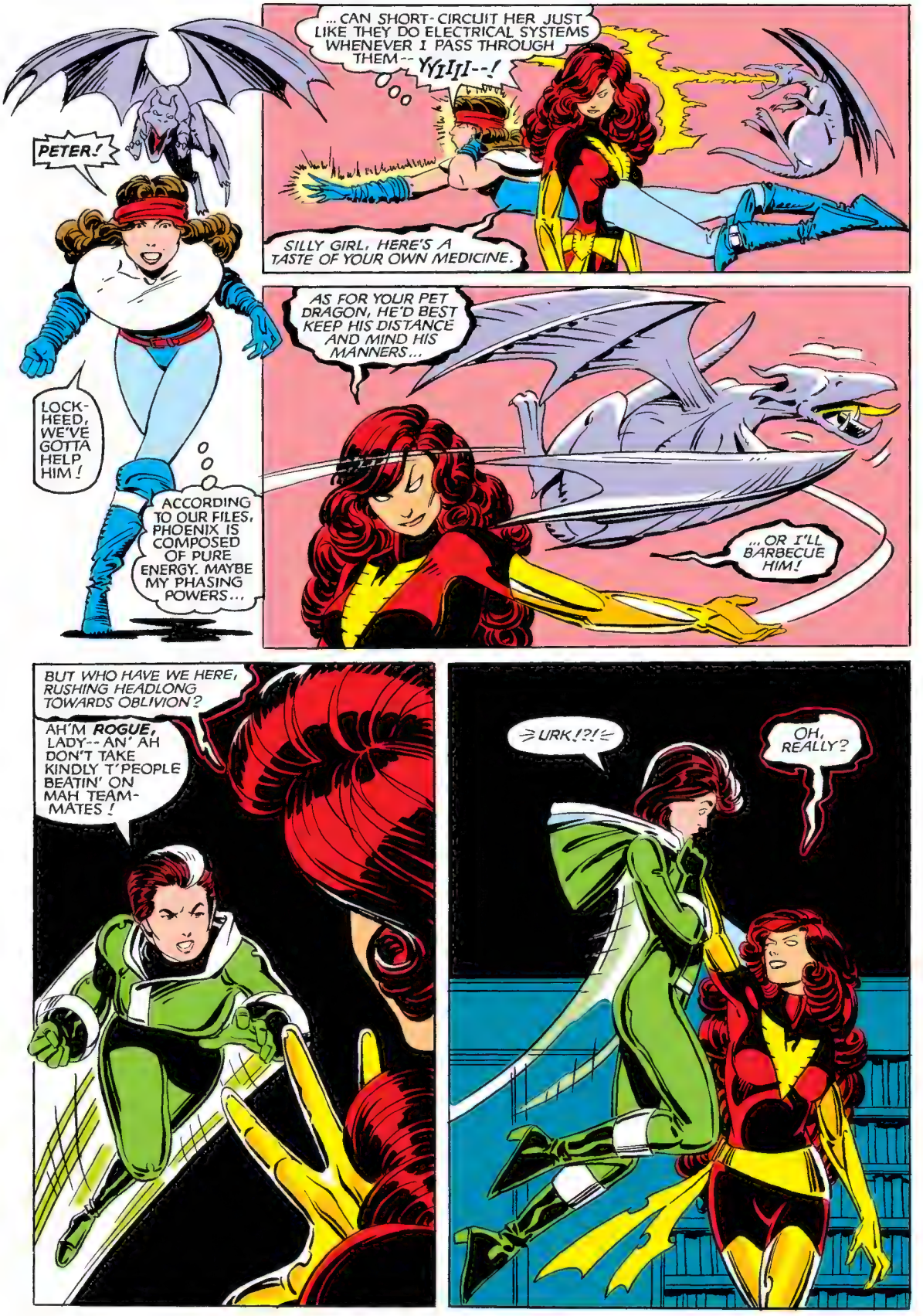
AND SO, AFTER DONNING THEIR COSTUMES, SEVEN SUPER-POWERED MUTANTS GATHER BEFORE THE MAN WHO BROUGHT THEM TOGETHER AND FORGED THEM INTO A TEAM OF UNSUNG, OFTEN OUTLAW SUPER-HEROES-- FOR WHAT MIGHT BE THEIR LAST BATTLE.
WITH YOUR TELEPATHIC ABILITIES, PROFESSOR, YOU KNOW OF MY FEARS ABOUT MADELYNE PRYOR-- THAT SHE MIGHT BE SOME KIND OF REINCARNATION OF PHOENIX. I WAS A MAN POSSESSED-- EACH TIME I PUT MY DOUBTS BEHIND ME, THEY REAPPEARED STRONGER THAN EVER.
LAST NIGHT, IN ALASKA, I ASKED POINT-BLANK IF SHE WAS JEAN REBORN. IN RETURN, I GOT DARN NEAR INCINERATED BY AN ENERGY BOLT. THE LAST THING I REMEMBER-- BEFORE ROGUE CAUGHT ME OUTSIDE--
--WAS DARK PHOENIX STANDING OVER ME, LAUGHING.
JEAN--PHOENIX--LOVED YOU, SCOTT. WHY, THEN, DID SHE ATTACK? WHY HEAL YOUR WOUNDS-- WHICH THE IMAGES IN YOUR MIND TELL ME WERE AGONIZING AND FATAL?
OUR FIRST STEP MUST BE TO FIND HER AND LEARN HER INTENTIONS-- AND FROM THERE, DEAL WITH THEM.
WE ARE FACING A COSMIC ENTITY, PROFESSOR-- PHOENIX CONSUMED ENTIRE STAR SYSTEMS. WOULD IT NOT BE WISE TO SUMMON REENFORCEMENTS?
WHEN I'M CONVINCED OF THE THREAT, STORM. I SENSED JEAN'S DEATH, YEARS AGO...
... BUT NOT THIS MIRACULOUS REBIRTH...
... AND I SHOULD HAVE.
CEREBRO WILL AMPLIFY MY PSI-TALENT A HUNDRED-FOLD. IF PHOENIX EXISTS, THIS WILL ENABLE ME TO FIND HER.

BUT AS THE SYSTEM IS ACTIVATED...
YEARRRGH!!
HE'S BEIN' ELECTROCUTED!
AH'LL CUT THE POWER-- SOMEONE CUT HIM LOOSE, B'FORE HE FRIES!
TOVARISCH, IS HE ALIVE?!
BARELY.
I HAVE TO TELEPORT HIM TO THE INFIRMARY.
NIGHTCRAWLER VANISHES FROM THE STUDY-- IN HIS CHARACTERISTIC BURST OF FLAME AND NOISOME SMOKE--
--TO REAPPEAR ALMOST INSTANTLY IN THE MEDICAL COMPLEX BURIED TEN METERS BELOW THE MANSION.
THIS WILL BE TOUCH-AND-GO. HERR PROFESSOR'S CONDITION IS ALREADY CRITICAL.
I ONLY HOPE THE STRAIN OF TELEPORTING DIDN'T MAKE THINGS WORSE.

WHILE IN THE MANSION ABOVE...
CEREBRO'S S'POSED TO HAVE AUTOMATIC SAFETY SYSTEMS, TO PREVENT AGAINST THAT KIND'A MASSIVE FEEDBACK.
YOU'RE THE COMPUTER WHIZ, PUN'KIN. CHECK OUT THE CONTROL CONSOLE, WILLYA?
YOU THINK IT WAS SABOTAGE, WOLVERINE?
I'VE A NASTY, SUSPICIOUS MIND-- AN' THAT ZAP WAS AWFULLY CONVENIENT. IT WOULDN'T HURT TO ELIMINATE THE POSSIBILITY.
THIS IS CRAZY! THE SAFETY INTERLOCKS HAVE BEEN DISENGAGED!
EVERYTHING'S REVERSED--THE PROFESSOR'S POWERS WERE AMPLIFIED, BUT INSTEAD OF PROJECTING HIS PSI-ENERGY OUTWARDS, CEREBRO REFLECTED IT BACK AT HIM! IT'S ALMOST LIKE HE DID THIS TO HIMSELF.
BUT HOW CAN THAT BE?! WE SAW EVERY MOVE HE MADE, THERE WERE NO MISTAKES-- THE SETTINGS WERE CORRECT.
WELL, THEY AIN'T NOW.
ACTUALLY, STORM, THERE'S A SIMPLE EXPLANATION.
WHAT IS IT--
--CYCLOPS!?!
WOULD YOU BELIEVE...
...THE END OF THE WORLD!

HI, GUYS!
MISS ME?
PHOENIX!

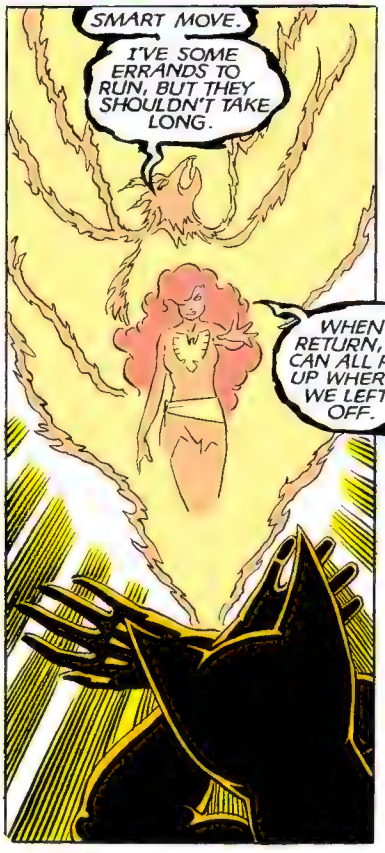

YOU MAY WEAR THE FORM OF OUR FRIEND, DEMONESS-- BUT YOU ARE NOT HER!
PHOENIX MUST HAVE USED HER OWN PSI-POWERS TO SABOTAGE CEREBRO. AND NOW SHE'S STRUCK DOWN SCOTT AS WELL. HER INTENTIONS ARE AS CLEAR AS CRYSTAL.
WE MUST COUNTER SWIFTLY, WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH!
AN IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY, ORORO. BUT WHAT MAKES YOU THINK YOUR LIGHTNING WILL PROVE ANY MORE EFFECTIVE THIS TIME...
...THAN WHEN LAST WE FOUGHT?
FOR MERCY'S SAKE, JEAN-- STOP IT! YOU ARE KILLING HER!
NOT REALLY, PETER. NOT YET.
I MEAN TO PLAY A BIT FIRST.
AARGH!
YOUR ARMORED BODY MAKES YOU ONE OF THE MOST FORMIDABLE X-MEN, COLOSSUS. BUT SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I CLOSE MY HAND--
--THUS!
"MY TELEKINETIC POWER CAN REND PLANETS ASUNDER, LITTLE RUSSIAN. IT CAN DO CONSIDERABLY WORSE TO YOU."

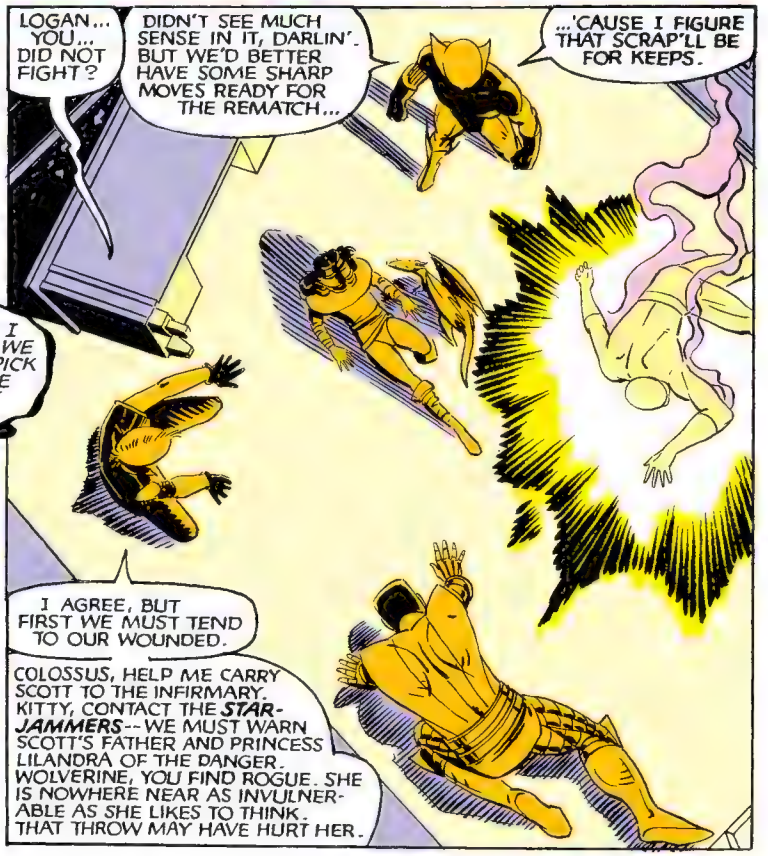

PETER!
LOCK-HEED, WE'VE GOTTA HELP HIM!
ACCORDING TO OUR FILES, PHOENIX IS COMPOSED OF PURE ENERGY. MAYBE MY PHASING POWERS...
...CAN SHORT-CIRCUIT HER JUST LIKE THEY DO ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS WHENEVER I PASS THROUGH THEM-- YYIII--!
SILLY GIRL, HERE'S A TASTE OF YOUR OWN MEDICINE.
AS FOR YOUR PET DRAGON, HE'D BEST KEEP HIS DISTANCE AND MIND HIS MANNERS...
...OR I'LL BARBECUE HIM!
BUT WHO HAVE WE HERE, RUSHING HEADLONG TOWARDS OBLIVION?
AH'M ROGUE, LADY-- AN' AH DON'T TAKE KINDLY T' PEOPLE BEATIN' ON MAH TEAM-MATES!
URK!?!
OH, REALLY?

KA-

BOOM

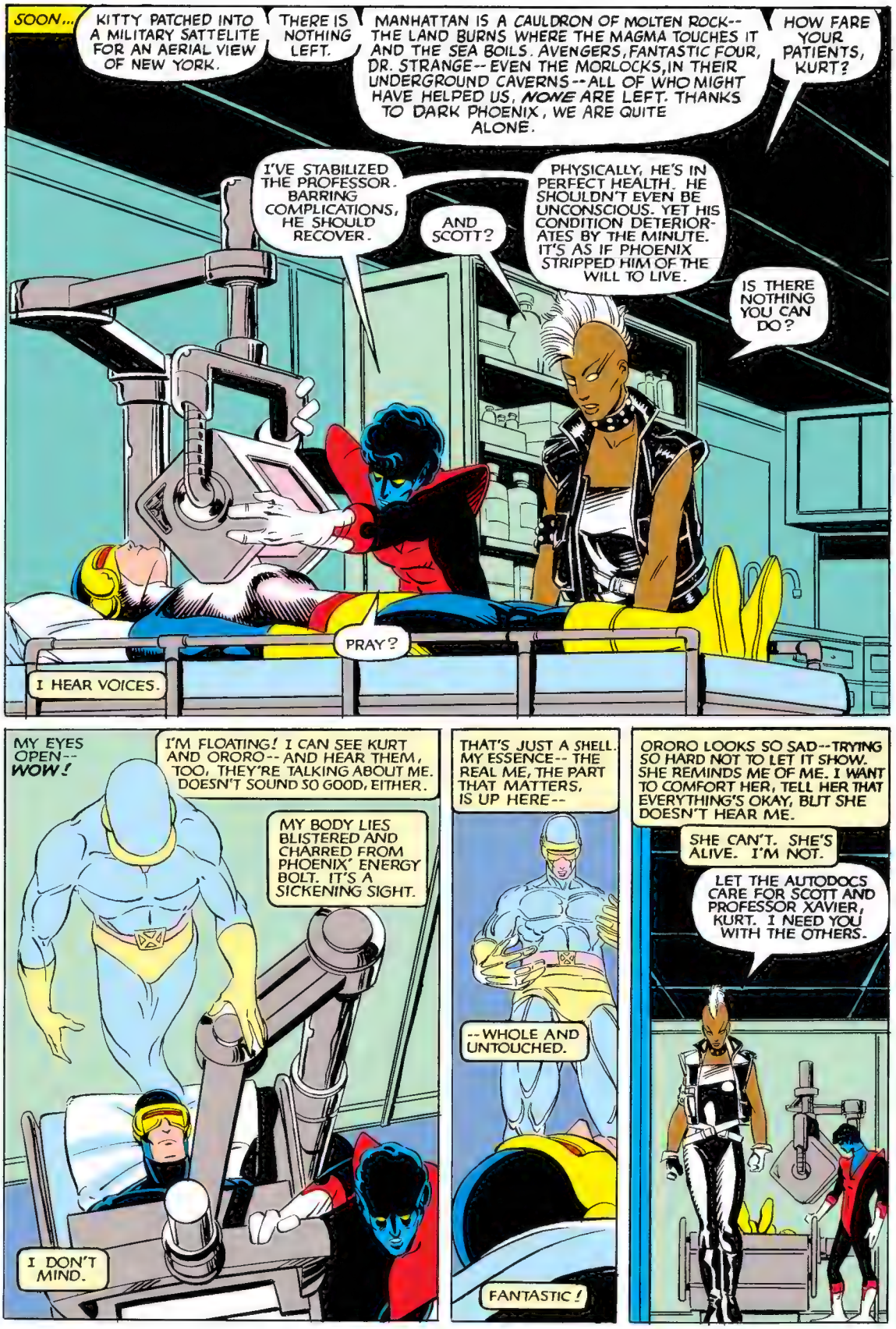
NICE MOVES, JEANNIE. YOU SURE AIN'T LOST YOUR TOUCH.
THANK YOU, WOLVERINE. I SEE YOU'VE EXTENDED YOUR CLAWS--CARE TO TRY YOUR LUCK?
NOPE.

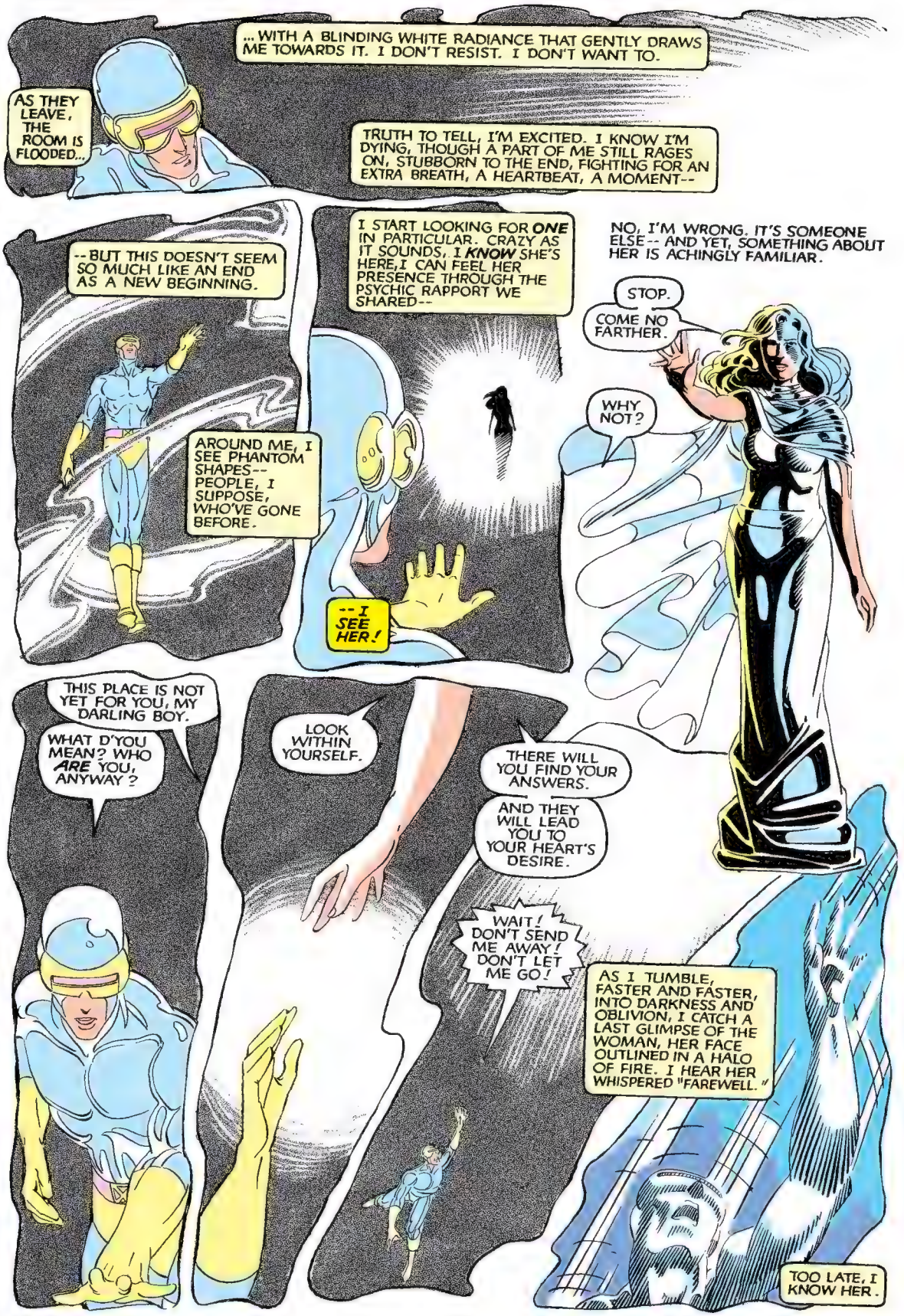

SMART MOVE.
I'VE SOME ERRANDS TO RUN, BUT THEY SHOULDN'T TAKE LONG.
WHEN I RETURN, WE CAN ALL PICK UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF.

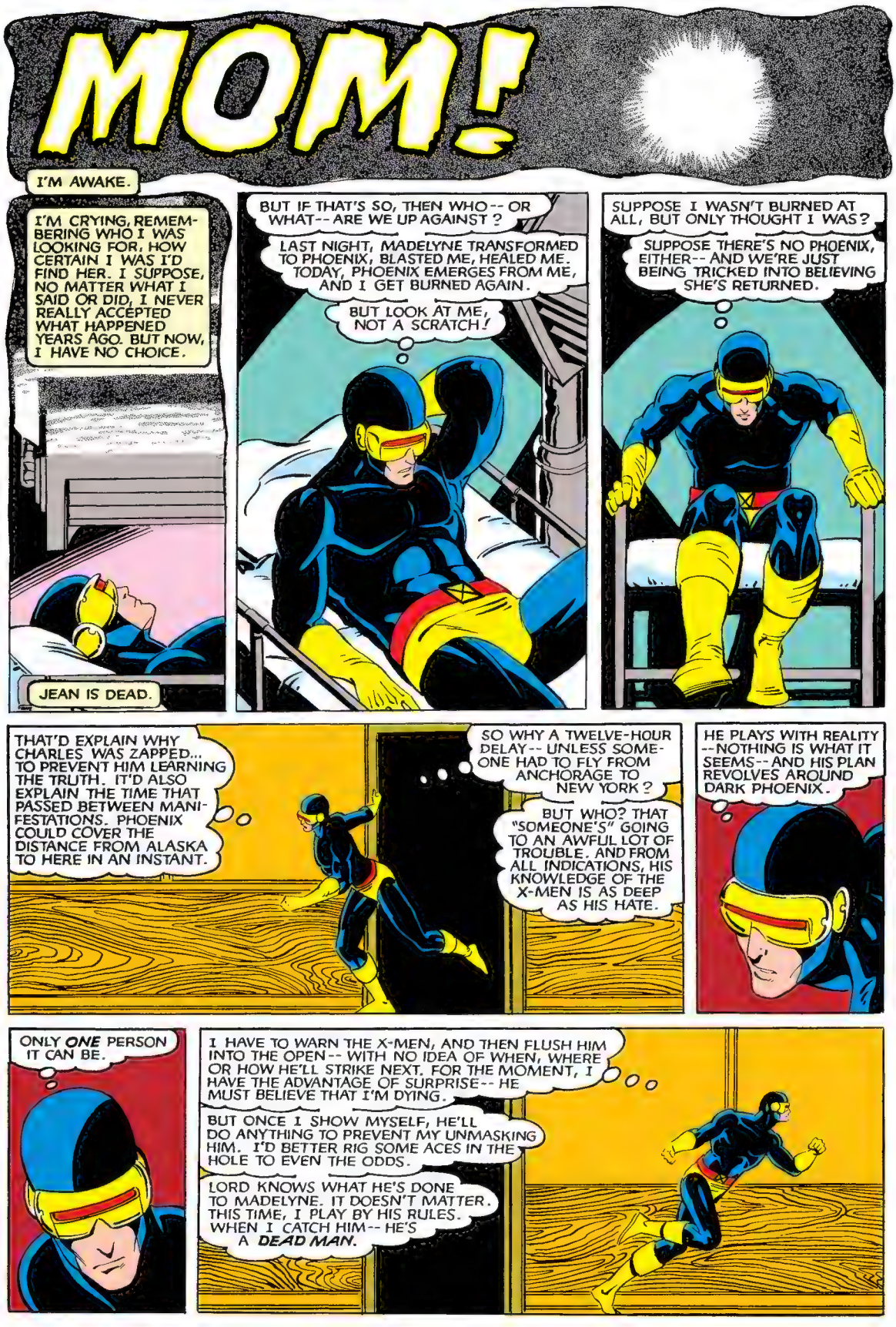

LOGAN... YOU... DID NOT FIGHT?
DIDN'T SEE MUCH SENSE IN IT, DARLIN'. BUT WE'D BETTER HAVE SOME SHARP MOVES READY FOR THE REMATCH...
...'CAUSE I FIGURE THAT SCRAP'LL BE FOR KEEPS.
I AGREE, BUT FIRST WE MUST TEND TO OUR WOUNDED.
COLOSSUS, HELP ME CARRY SCOTT TO THE INFIRMARY. KITTY, CONTACT THE STAR-JAMMERS--WE MUST WARN SCOTT'S FATHER AND PRINCESS LILANDRA OF THE DANGER. WOLVERINE, YOU FIND ROGUE. SHE IS NOWHERE NEAR AS INVULNERABLE AS SHE LIKES TO THINK. THAT THROW MAY HAVE HURT HER.

MINUTES LATER...
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO CONTACT THE STAR-JAMMERS EVER SINCE PHOENIX LEFT, STORM, BUT THERE'S MASSIVE INTERFERENCE ALL ACROSS THE SPECTRUM. EVEN OUR LASER AND SUBSPACE COMLINKS ARE BEING SCRAMBLED.
PHOENIX'S DOING, MY FRIENDS?
PROBABLY. KEEP AT IT, KITTEN. WE MUST GET THROUGH.
BINGO! I'M GETTING A RESPONSE!
X-MEN... THIS IS CORSAIR-- HOPE YOU CAN SEE... HEAR ME...
PHOENIX ATTACKED... NO WARNING, LESS CHANCE-- OTHER STARJAMMERS, LILANDRA... DEAD... I'M ONLY ONE LEFT... MY SHIP... GUTTED WRECK-- ANOTHER PASS'LL FINISH US...
HERE SHE COMES!
TELL SCOTT AND HIS BROTHER ALEX-- THEIR OLD MAN IS PROUD OF THEM! TELL THEM I LOVE --

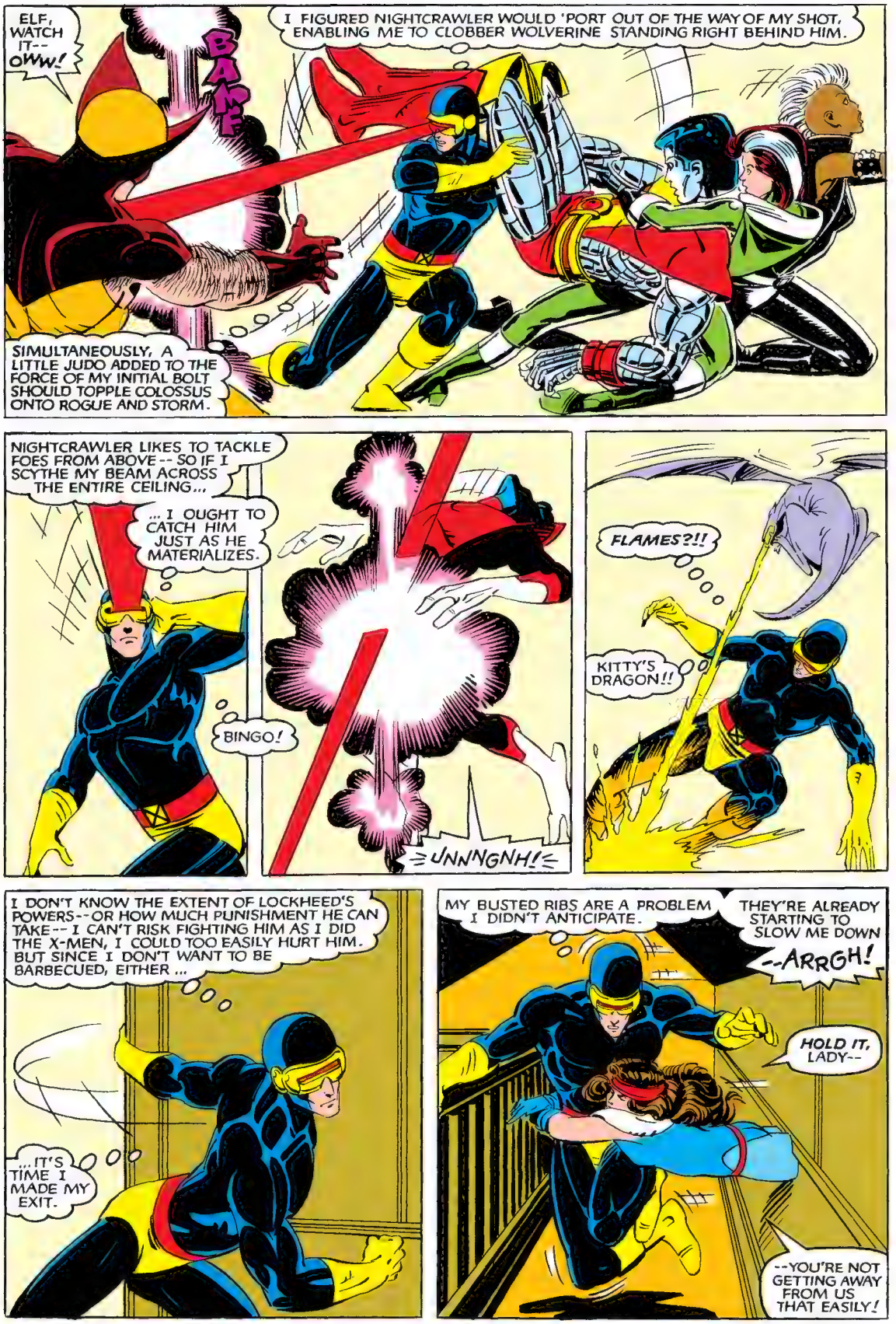
HOW... HOW COULD SHE?! THEY WERE OUR-- THEY WERE HER-- FRIENDS!
WHAT DO WE DO NOW, STORM?! WHO SHOULD I CALL NEXT?!!
AVENGERS MANSION, CAPTAIN AMERICA SPEAKING...
I AM STORM, LEADER OF X-MEN. WE NEED THE AVENGERS' AID, CAPTAIN, URGENTLY!
THE FATE OF THE WORLD-- IF NOT ALL CREATION--HANGS IN THE BALANCE!
GIVE ME WHAT DETAILS YOU CAN, STORM, I'LL SUMMON THE OTHERS.
THE THREAT IS DARK PHOENIX, A FORMER-- GODDESS!
COMRADES-- LOOK AT THE SCREEN!!
THE GROUND-- SHAKING-- IS IT AN EARTH-QUAKE?!
AHRRR!
IT'S GONE BLANK! THE TRANSMISSION HAS BEEN BROKEN!
ORORO, DO YOU THINK --?!
SEE FOR YOURSELF, LITTLE BROTHER.
FOR A CREATURE WHO ONCE CONSUMED A WORLD-- FIVE BILLION INNOCENT SOULS--
--DESTROYING A CITY IS CHILD'S PLAY.


SOON...
KITTY PATCHED INTO A MILITARY SATTELITE FOR AN AERIAL VIEW OF NEW YORK.
THERE IS NOTHING LEFT.
MANHATTAN IS A CAULDRON OF MOLTEN ROCK--THE LAND BURNS WHERE THE MAGMA TOUCHES IT AND THE SEA BOILS. AVENGERS, FANTASTIC FOUR, DR. STRANGE--EVEN THE MORLOCKS, IN THEIR UNDERGROUND CAVERNS--ALL OF WHO MIGHT HAVE HELPED US, NOW ARE LEFT. THANKS TO DARK PHOENIX, WE ARE QUITE ALONE.
HOW FARE YOUR PATIENTS, KURT?
I'VE STABILIZED THE PROFESSOR. BARRING COMPLICATIONS, HE SHOULD RECOVER.
AND SCOTT?
PHYSICALLY, HE'S IN PERFECT HEALTH. HE SHOULDN'T EVEN BE UNCONSCIOUS. YET HIS CONDITION DETERIORATES BY THE MINUTE. IT'S AS IF PHOENIX STRIPPED HIM OF THE WILL TO LIVE.
IS THERE NOTHING YOU CAN DO?
PRAY?
I HEAR VOICES.
MY EYES OPEN-- WOW!
I'M FLOATING! I CAN SEE KURT AND ORORO-- AND HEAR THEM, TOO. THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT ME. DOESN'T SOUND SO GOOD, EITHER.
MY BODY LIES BLISTERED AND CHARRED FROM PHOENIX' ENERGY BOLT. IT'S A SICKENING SIGHT.
I DON'T MIND.
THAT'S JUST A SHELL. MY ESSENCE-- THE REAL ME, THE PART THAT MATTERS, IS UP HERE--
--WHOLE AND UNTOUCHED.
FANTASTIC!
ORORO LOOKS SO SAD--TRYING SO HARD NOT TO LET IT SHOW. SHE REMINDS ME OF ME. I WANT TO COMFORT HER, TELL HER THAT EVERYTHING'S OKAY, BUT SHE DOESN'T HEAR ME.
SHE CAN'T. SHE'S ALIVE. I'M NOT.
LET THE AUTODOCS CARE FOR SCOTT AND PROFESSOR XAVIER, KURT. I NEED YOU WITH THE OTHERS.

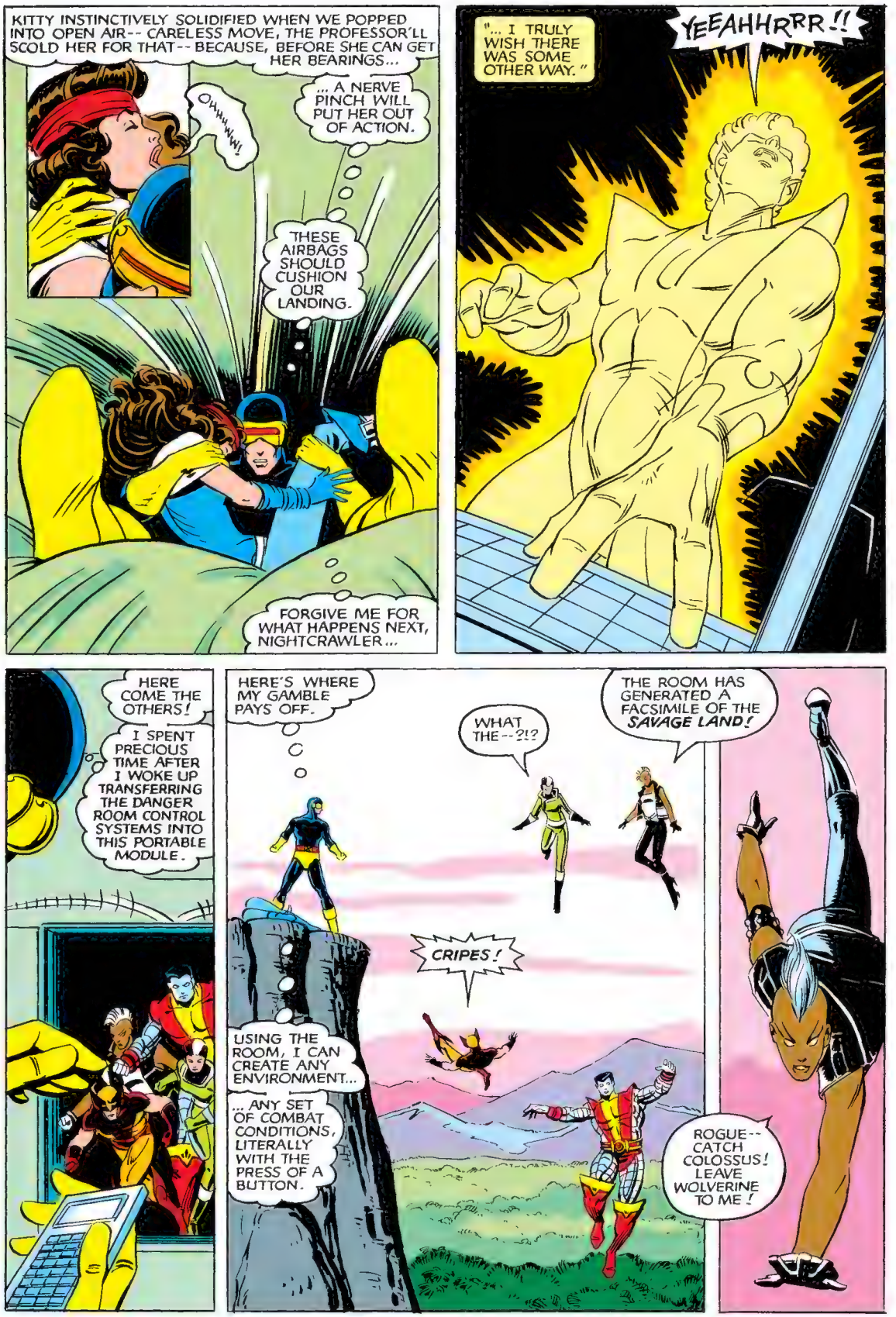

...WITH A BLINDING WHITE RADIANCE THAT GENTLY DRAWS ME TOWARDS IT. I DON'T RESIST. I DON'T WANT TO.
AS THEY LEAVE, THE ROOM IS FLOODED...
TRUTH TO TELL, I'M EXCITED. I KNOW I'M DYING, THOUGH A PART OF ME STILL RAGES ON, STUBBORN TO THE END, FIGHTING FOR AN EXTRA BREATH, A HEARTBEAT, A MOMENT--
--BUT THIS DOESN'T SEEM SO MUCH LIKE AN END AS A NEW BEGINNING.
AROUND ME, I SEE PHANTOM SHAPES-- PEOPLE, I SUPPOSE, WHO'VE GONE BEFORE.
I START LOOKING FOR ONE IN PARTICULAR. CRAZY AS IT SOUNDS, I KNOW SHE'S HERE, I CAN FEEL HER PRESENCE THROUGH THE PSYCHIC RAPPORT WE SHARED--
--I SEE HER!
NO, I'M WRONG. IT'S SOMEONE ELSE-- AND YET, SOMETHING ABOUT HER IS ACHINGLY FAMILIAR.
STOP.
COME NO FARTHER.
WHY NOT?
THIS PLACE IS NOT YET FOR YOU, MY DARLING BOY.
WHAT D'YOU MEAN? WHO ARE YOU, ANYWAY?
LOOK WITHIN YOURSELF.
THERE WILL YOU FIND YOUR ANSWERS.
AND THEY WILL LEAD YOU TO YOUR HEART'S DESIRE.
WAIT! DON'T SEND ME AWAY! DON'T LET ME GO!
AS I TUMBLE, FASTER AND FASTER, INTO DARKNESS AND OBLIVION, I CATCH A LAST GLIMPSE OF THE WOMAN, HER FACE OUTLINED IN A HALO OF FIRE. I HEAR HER WHISPERED "FAREWELL."
TOO LATE, I KNOW HER.

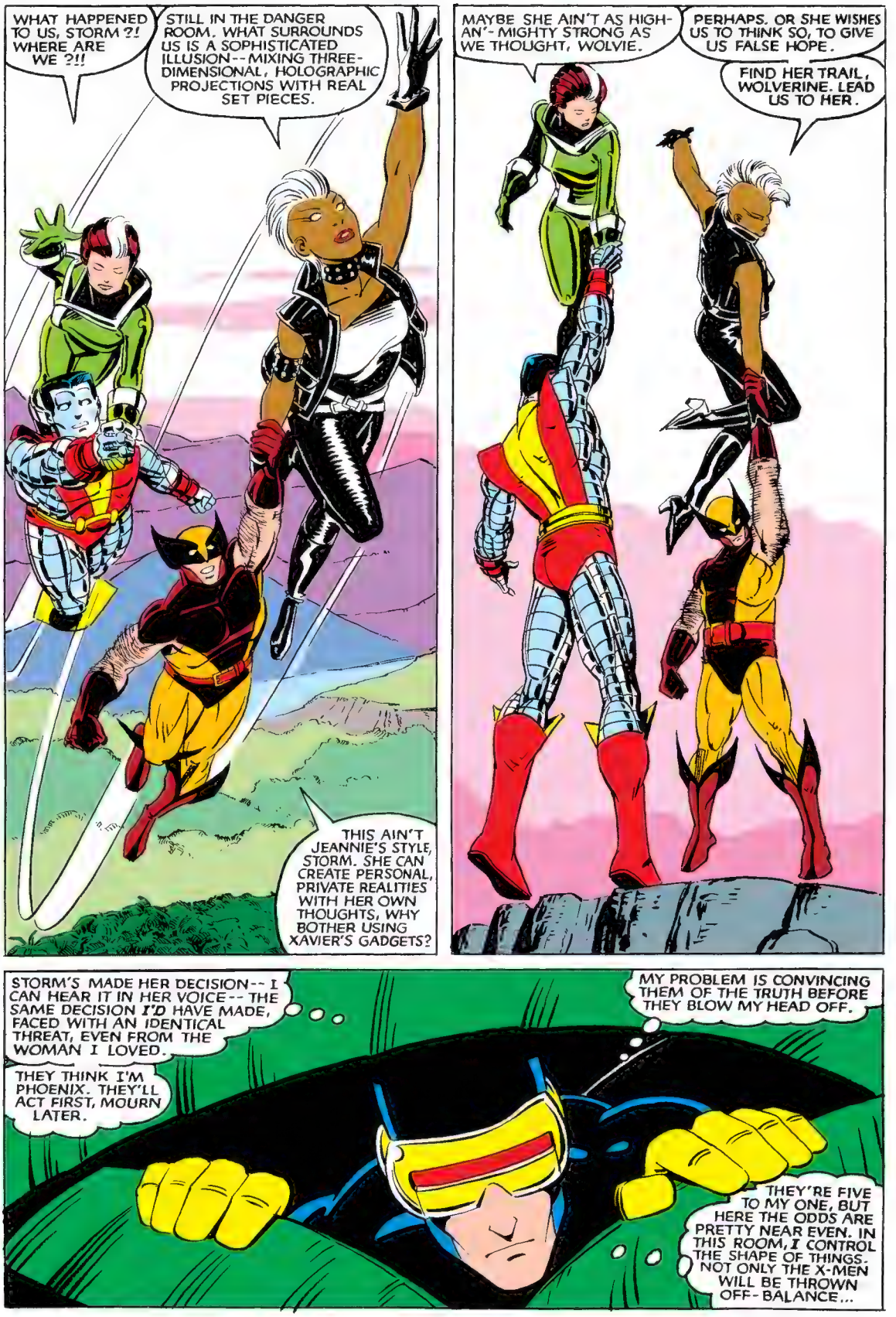

MOM!
I'M AWAKE.
I'M CRYING, REMEMBERING WHO I WAS LOOKING FOR. HOW CERTAIN I WAS I'D FIND HER. I SUPPOSE, NO MATTER WHAT I SAID OR DID, I NEVER REALLY ACCEPTED WHAT HAPPENED YEARS AGO. BUT NOW, I HAVE NO CHOICE.
JEAN IS DEAD.
BUT IF THAT'S SO, THEN WHO -- OR WHAT -- ARE WE UP AGAINST?
LAST NIGHT, MADELYNE TRANSFORMED TO PHOENIX, BLASTED ME, HEALED ME. TODAY, PHOENIX EMERGES FROM ME, AND I GET BURNED AGAIN.
BUT LOOK AT ME, NOT A SCRATCH!
SUPPOSE I WASN'T BURNED AT ALL, BUT ONLY THOUGHT I WAS?
SUPPOSE THERE'S NO PHOENIX, EITHER -- AND WE'RE JUST BEING TRICKED INTO BELIEVING SHE'S RETURNED.
THAT'D EXPLAIN WHY CHARLES WAS ZAPPED... TO PREVENT HIM LEARNING THE TRUTH. IT'D ALSO EXPLAIN THE TIME THAT PASSED BETWEEN MANIFESTATIONS. PHOENIX COULD COVER THE DISTANCE FROM ALASKA TO HERE IN AN INSTANT.
SO WHY A TWELVE-HOUR DELAY -- UNLESS SOMEONE HAD TO FLY FROM ANCHORAGE TO NEW YORK?
BUT WHO? THAT "SOMEONE'S" GOING TO AN AWFUL LOT OF TROUBLE. AND FROM ALL INDICATIONS, HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE X-MEN IS AS DEEP AS HIS HATE.
HE PLAYS WITH REALITY -- NOTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS -- AND HIS PLAN REVOLVES AROUND DARK PHOENIX.
ONLY ONE PERSON IT CAN BE.
I HAVE TO WARN THE X-MEN, AND THEN FLUSH HIM INTO THE OPEN -- WITH NO IDEA OF WHEN, WHERE OR HOW HE'LL STRIKE NEXT. FOR THE MOMENT, I HAVE THE ADVANTAGE OF SURPRISE -- HE MUST BELIEVE THAT I'M DYING.
BUT ONCE I SHOW MYSELF, HE'LL DO ANYTHING TO PREVENT MY UNMASKING HIM. I'D BETTER RIG SOME ACES IN THE HOLE TO EVEN THE ODDS.
LORD KNOWS WHAT HE'S DONE TO MADELYNE. IT DOESN'T MATTER. THIS TIME, I PLAY BY HIS RULES. WHEN I CATCH HIM -- HE'S A DEAD MAN.

TEN MINUTES LATER...
STORM, I'VE FOUND THE ANSWER! IT ISN'T PHOENIX WE'RE FACING--!
MURDERESS! HAVE YOU COME TO GLOAT...
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, COLOSSUS?!
...OVER YOUR BUTCHERY?!
IT'S ME, CYCLOPS-- HEY!!
STORM'S USING A WIND TO YANK ME INTO THE ROOM! SHE'S REACTING LIKE I'M A VILLAIN, AND FROM THE WAY COLOSSUS SPOKE...
...IT ISN'T HARD TO GUESS WHO.
LISTEN TO ME--
--YOU'RE BEING TRICKED! NOTHING YOU SEE OR HEAR IS REAL!
IF SO, WHY THEN SHOULD WE HEED YOUR WORDS?
BRILLIANT, SCOTTY. YOU WALTZED RIGHT INTO THAT ONE--
WHUNFF!
COLOSSUS WASN'T PULLING THAT PUNCH-- I FELT A COUPLE OF RIBS SNAP-- I CAN'T LET HIM LAND ANOTHER.
I HATE DOING THIS-- BUT EVEN A HIGH-POWER OPTIC BLAST...
ZAP!
...SHOULDN'T DO MORE THAN SHAKE HIM UP.


ELF, WATCH IT-- OWW!
BAMF
I FIGURED NIGHTCRAWLER WOULD 'PORT OUT OF THE WAY OF MY SHOT, ENABLING ME TO CLOBBER WOLVERINE STANDING RIGHT BEHIND HIM.
SIMULTANEOUSLY, A LITTLE JUDO ADDED TO THE FORCE OF MY INITIAL BOLT SHOULD TOPPLE COLOSSUS ONTO ROGUE AND STORM.
NIGHTCRAWLER LIKES TO TACKLE FOES FROM ABOVE -- SO IF I SCYTHE MY BEAM ACROSS THE ENTIRE CEILING...
... I OUGHT TO CATCH HIM JUST AS HE MATERIALIZES.
BINGO!
=UNNNGNH!=
FLAMES?!!
KITTY'S DRAGON!!
I DON'T KNOW THE EXTENT OF LOCKHEED'S POWERS--OR HOW MUCH PUNISHMENT HE CAN TAKE-- I CAN'T RISK FIGHTING HIM AS I DID THE X-MEN, I COULD TOO EASILY HURT HIM. BUT SINCE I DON'T WANT TO BE BARBECUED, EITHER ...
... IT'S TIME I MADE MY EXIT.
MY BUSTED RIBS ARE A PROBLEM I DIDN'T ANTICIPATE.
THEY'RE ALREADY STARTING TO SLOW ME DOWN
--ARRGH!
HOLD IT, LADY--
--YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY FROM US THAT EASILY!

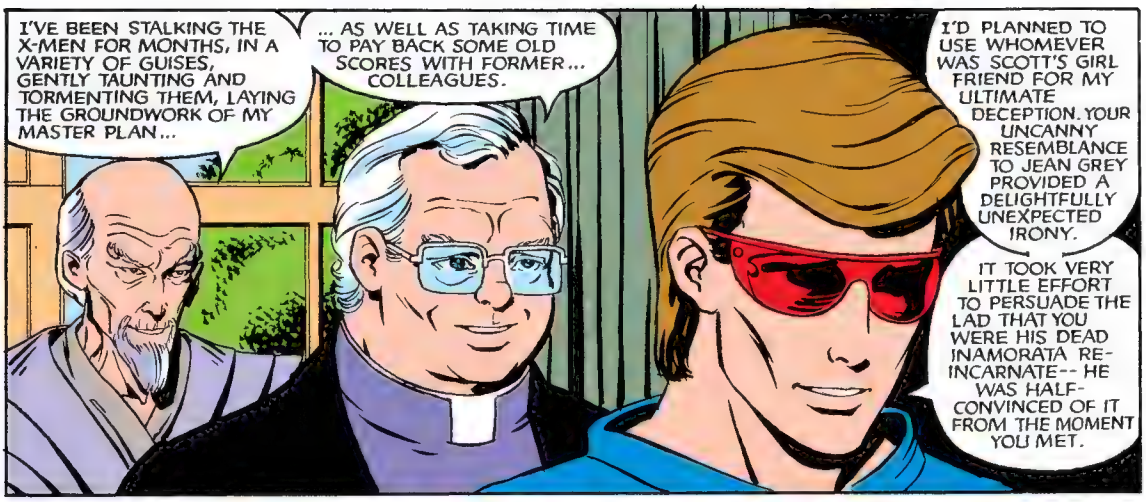
I WAS WONDERING WHERE KITTY'D SHOW UP. LET'S SEE IF I CAN TURN HER ATTACK TO MY ADVANTAGE.
WOLVERINE MUST'VE TAUGHT HER THAT TACKLE-- IT HURT!
YOU CRAZY--! YOU'RE THROWING US OFF THE BALCONY!
WHAT'S THAT DUMB KID TRYIN' T' PROVE-- JEANNIE'LL ROAST HER ALIVE!
THEN WE MUST DENY HER THE OPPORTUNITY.
DOWN-STAIRS, X-MEN-- QUICKLY!
PERFECT! KITTY REACTED PRECISELY AS I ANTICIPATED. I CAUGHT HER OFF-GUARD-- SHE DIDN'T THINK TO SIMPLY LET ME GO-- AND NOW, RATHER THAN CRASH INTO THE FLOOR AND RISK SERIOUS INJURY...
...SHE'S PHASING US THROUGH!
THEY WILL FALL IN A STRAIGHT LINE. THE NEXT OPEN SPACE BENEATH THEM IS THE DANGER ROOM!
ARRANGE A PROPER WELCOME FOR PHOENIX, NIGHT-CRAWLER. IF YOU CAN SAVE KITTY AS WELL, DO SO. BUT REMEMBER-- AGAINST THIS FOE...
...OUR LIVES ARE EXPEND-ABLE.
BAMF
ICH..., VERSTEHEN, STORM.
THAT FLASH OF LIGHT IN THE CONTROL BOOTH-- PROBABLY NIGHTCRAWLER, TELEPORTING AHEAD OF HIS TEAM-MATES.
THE ROOM'S SYSTEMS ARE DESIGNED TO TRAIN US, NOT KILL. I'LL HAVE TO RE-PROGRAM THE COMPUTERS-- DISENGAGE THE SAFETY INTERLOCKS--
--BUT WILL PHOENIX GIVE ME THE CHANCE?!?
NO MATTER. I MUST AT LEAST TRY.

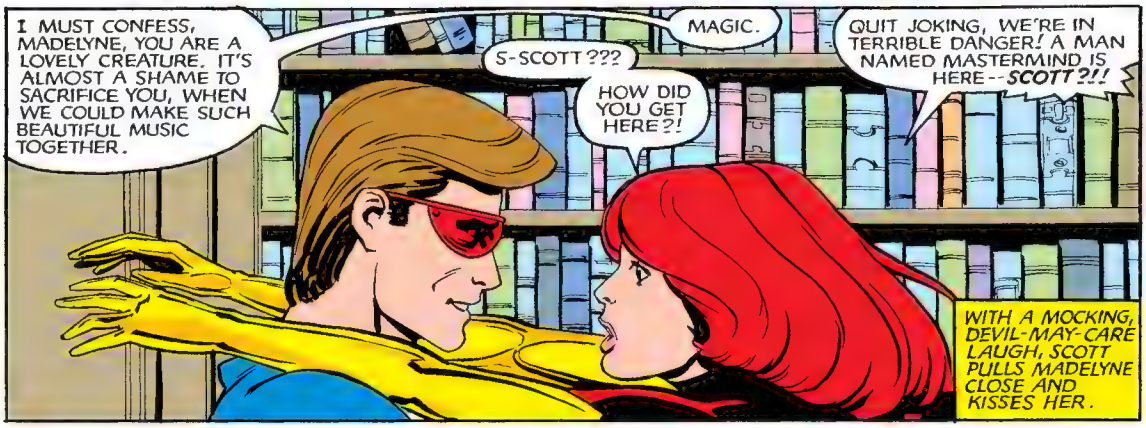

KITTY INSTINCTIVELY SOLIDIFIED WHEN WE POPPED INTO OPEN AIR-- CARELESS MOVE, THE PROFESSOR'LL SCOLD HER FOR THAT-- BECAUSE, BEFORE SHE CAN GET HER BEARINGS...
... A NERVE PINCH WILL PUT HER OUT OF ACTION.
OHHWW!
THESE AIRBAGS SHOULD CUSHION OUR LANDING.
FORGIVE ME FOR WHAT HAPPENS NEXT, NIGHTCRAWLER...
"... I TRULY WISH THERE WAS SOME OTHER WAY."
YEEAHHRRR!!
HERE COME THE OTHERS!
I SPENT PRECIOUS TIME AFTER I WOKE UP TRANSFERRING THE DANGER ROOM CONTROL SYSTEMS INTO THIS PORTABLE MODULE.
HERE'S WHERE MY GAMBLE PAYS OFF.
USING THE ROOM, I CAN CREATE ANY ENVIRONMENT...
... ANY SET OF COMBAT CONDITIONS, LITERALLY WITH THE PRESS OF A BUTTON.
WHAT THE--?!?
THE ROOM HAS GENERATED A FACSIMILE OF THE SAVAGE LAND!
CRIPES!
ROGUE-- CATCH COLOSSUS! LEAVE WOLVERINE TO ME!

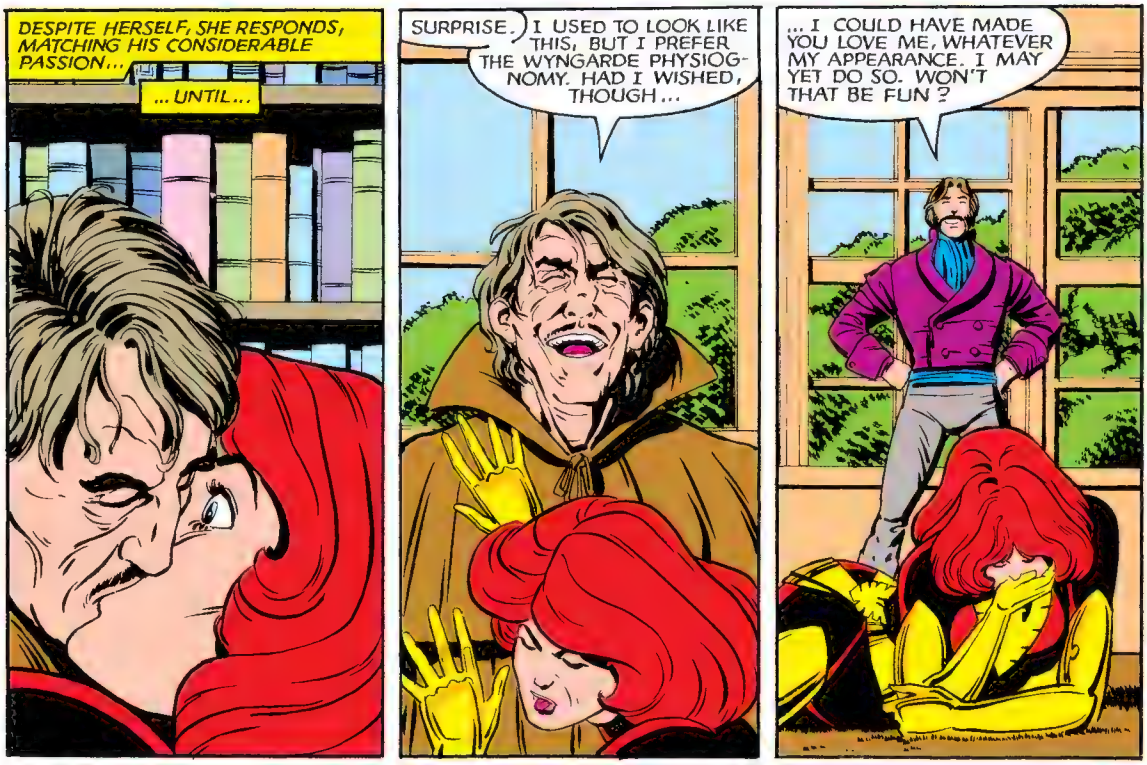

WHAT HAPPENED TO US, STORM?! WHERE ARE WE?!!
STILL IN THE DANGER ROOM. WHAT SURROUNDS US IS A SOPHISTICATED ILLUSION--MIXING THREE-DIMENSIONAL, HOLOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS WITH REAL SET PIECES.
THIS AIN'T JEANNIE'S STYLE, STORM. SHE CAN CREATE PERSONAL, PRIVATE REALITIES WITH HER OWN THOUGHTS, WHY BOTHER USING XAVIER'S GADGETS?
MAYBE SHE AIN'T AS HIGH-AN'-MIGHTY STRONG AS WE THOUGHT, WOLVIE.
PERHAPS. OR SHE WISHES US TO THINK SO, TO GIVE US FALSE HOPE.
FIND HER TRAIL, WOLVERINE. LEAD US TO HER.
STORM'S MADE HER DECISION-- I CAN HEAR IT IN HER VOICE-- THE SAME DECISION I'D HAVE MADE, FACED WITH AN IDENTICAL THREAT, EVEN FROM THE WOMAN I LOVED.
THEY THINK I'M PHOENIX. THEY'LL ACT FIRST, MOURN LATER.
MY PROBLEM IS CONVINCING THEM OF THE TRUTH BEFORE THEY BLOW MY HEAD OFF.
THEY'RE FIVE TO MY ONE, BUT HERE THE ODDS ARE PRETTY NEAR EVEN. IN THIS ROOM, I CONTROL THE SHAPE OF THINGS. NOT ONLY THE X-MEN WILL BE THROWN OFF-BALANCE...

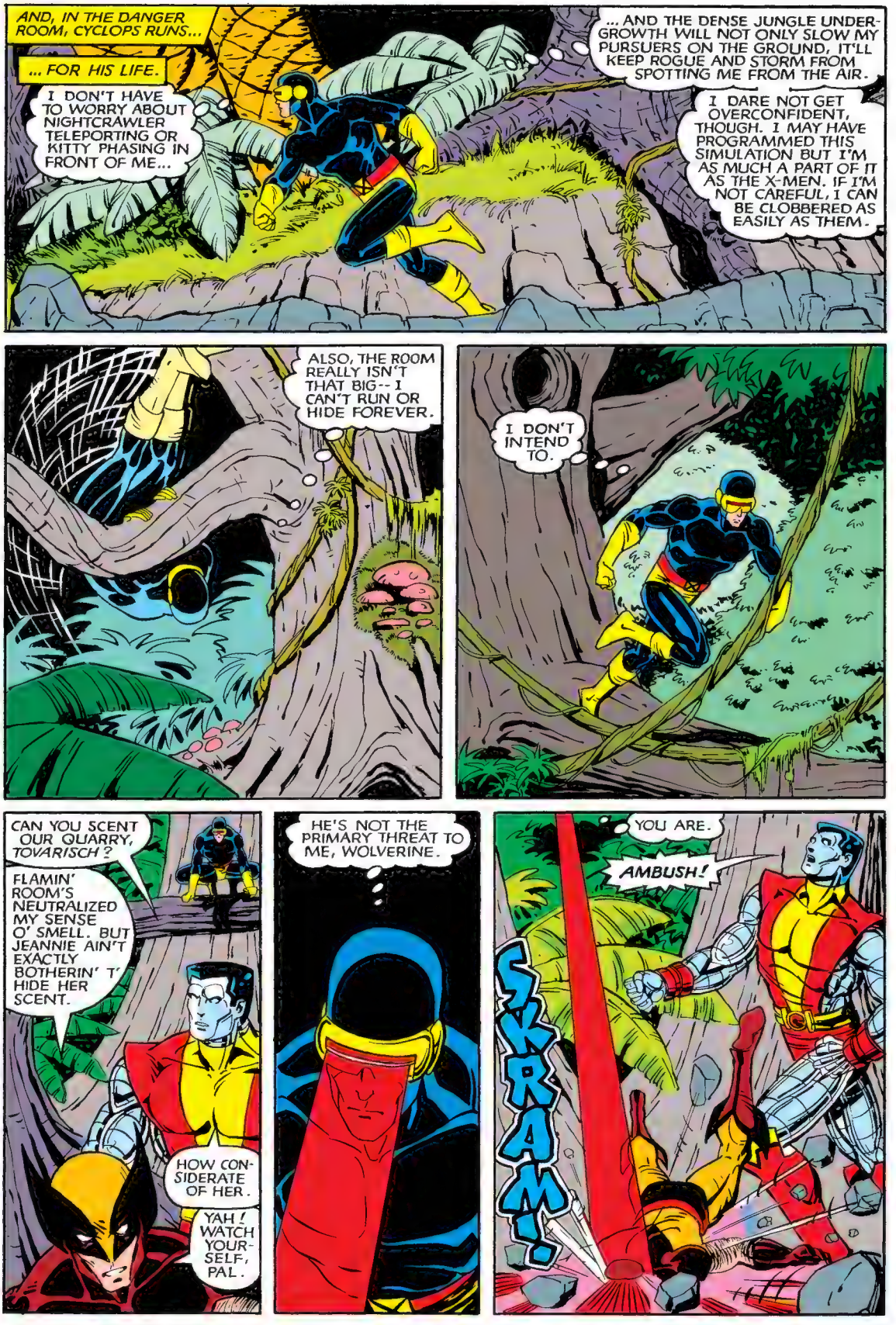
"...BUT OUR TRUE FOE AS WELL."
BRILLIANT! CYCLOPS, YOU NEVER CEASE TO AMAZE ME. WHAT BETTER PLOY TO USE AGAINST A MASTER ILLUSIONIST...
...THAN YOUR OWN ILLUSIONS.
SUCH A PITY THEY WON'T SAVE YOU.
GOOD AFTERNOON, Ms. PRYOR. I TRUST YOU'RE ENJOYING THE SHOW.
I... AM I CRAZY?
NOT UNLESS I WISH YOU TO BE.
MY CLOTHES-- THIS PLACE-- AM I DEAD; IS THIS HELL?!!
NO. AND YES.
WHO ARE YOU?!?
JASON WYNGARDE, MA'AM, AT YOUR SERVICE. OR, AS THE X-MEN KNOW ME:
MASTERMIND!
I AM A VILLAIN AND VERY SOON NOW, WITH YOUR ASSISTANCE...
...I SHALL DESTROY MY OLDEST, MOST HATED FOES: THE X-MEN!
THE THRONE-- THE FIRE-- GONE!
THEY WERE NEVER HERE. WHERE I AM CONCERNED, MY DEAR, NOTHING IS AS IT SEEMS. REALITY IS WHAT I CHOOSE TO MAKE OF IT.
AND EVERYONE IN IT MERELY PAWNS FOR YOUR AMUSEMENT?
PRECISELY.
WHY?! WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?!!

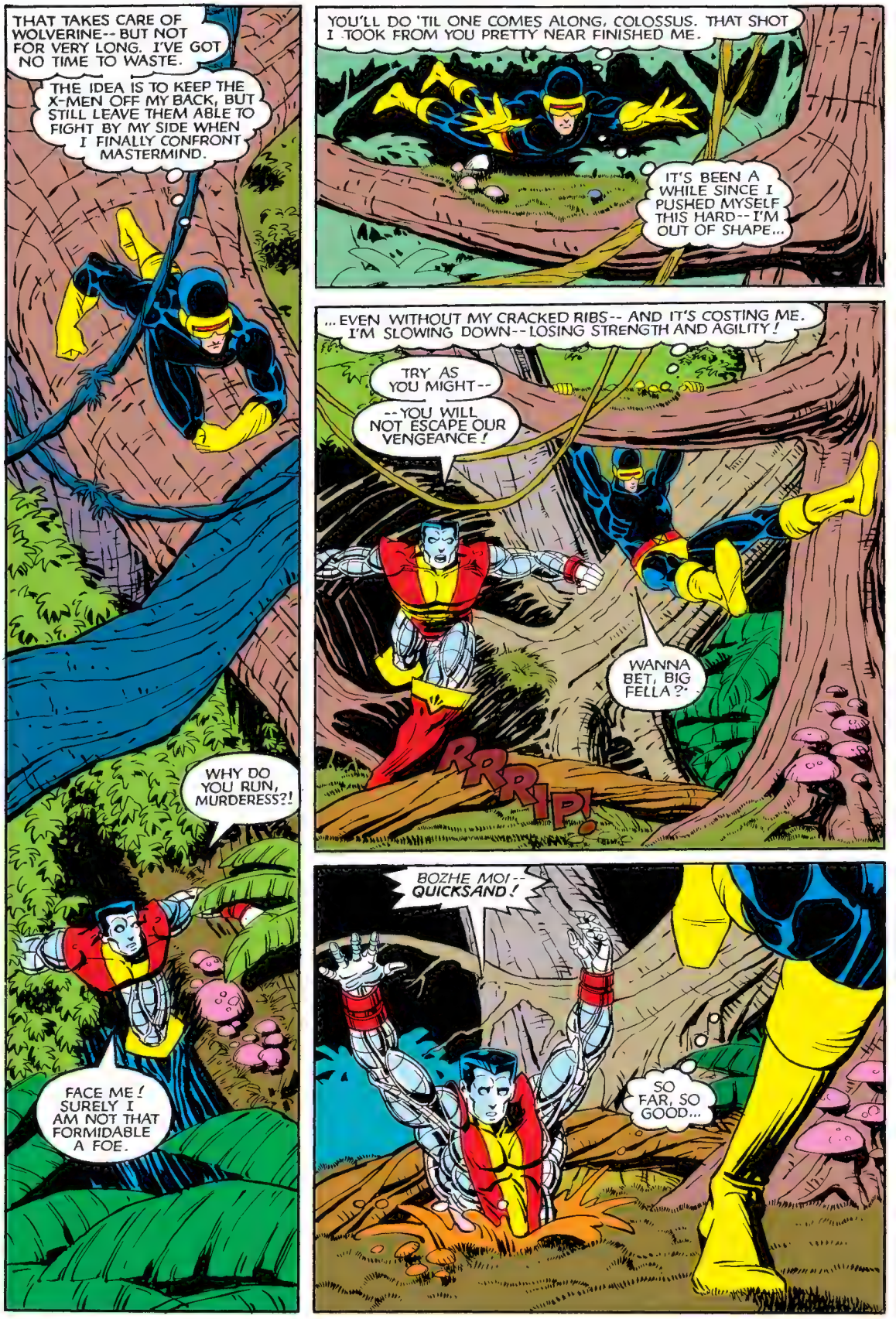
REVENGE. I HAVE CONVINCED THE X-MEN THAT DARK PHOENIX HAS RESURRECTED HERSELF AND EMBARKED ON A MURDEROUS RAMPAGE. I SHALL FURTHER CONVINCE THEM -- AS I'VE ALREADY DONE WITH SCOTT -- THAT YOU, MY DEAR, ARE PHOENIX. TO SAVE THE UNIVERSE, THEY WILL KILL YOU -- AND THEREBY DESTROY THEMSELVES.
THEY WILL HAVE SLAIN NOT ONLY AN INNOCENT, BUT SCOTT SUMMERS' BELOVED! IT IS A MORAL BLOW FROM WHICH THEY WILL NEVER RECOVER.
I WON'T LET YOU!
HOW WILL YOU STOP ME? FOR ALL YOU KNOW, MADELYNE, I'M NOT EVEN IN THIS ROOM -- IF, INDEED, THE ROOM ITSELF IS NOT AN ILLUSION.
OR PERHAPS YOU HAVE GONE INSANE? YOU CERTAINLY HAVE REASON ENOUGH -- 378 PEOPLE, PASSENGERS ENTRUSTED TO YOUR CARE, DEAD AT YOUR HANDS...
SHUT UP!
THAT WAS AN ACCIDENT -- I TRIED MY BEST TO SAVE THEM -- IT ISN'T MY FAULT I SURVIVED!
CONSIDERING THE FATE I HAVE IN STORE FOR YOU, CHILD -- BETTER YOU HAD PERISHED WITH YOUR AIRCRAFT.
WHY?!? WHY ME!?!
"I BEHOLD YOUR FACE -- AND SEE JEAN GREY -- PHOENIX --
"-- AND MY OWN DAMNATION.
"SHE MADE ME ONE WITH THE COSMOS. I... TOUCHED THE FACE, THE POWER, THE GLORY OF... GOD. BUT SUCH AN EXPERIENCE IS NOT FOR MORTAL MAN.
"IT DROVE ME MAD.
EVENTUALLY, I RECOVERED -- FOREVER CURSED WITH THE MEMORY OF WHAT I'D BEEN, AND COULD NEVER BE AGAIN. THANKS TO PHOENIX, MY LIFE IS AN UNENDING TORMENT FROM WHICH NOT EVEN DEATH WILL BE A RELEASE.
I CANNOT AVENGE MYSELF ON HER. BUT I CAN MAKE THOSE WHO LOVED HER -- THE X-MEN --
--SUFFER IN HER PLACE.


I'VE BEEN STALKING THE X-MEN FOR MONTHS, IN A VARIETY OF GUISES, GENTLY TAUNTING AND TORMENTING THEM, LAYING THE GROUNDWORK OF MY MASTER PLAN...
... AS WELL AS TAKING TIME TO PAY BACK SOME OLD SCORES WITH FORMER... COLLEAGUES.
I'D PLANNED TO USE WHOMEVER WAS SCOTT'S GIRL FRIEND FOR MY ULTIMATE DECEPTION. YOUR UNCANNY RESEMBLANCE TO JEAN GREY PROVIDED A DELIGHTFULLY UNEXPECTED IRONY.
IT TOOK VERY LITTLE EFFORT TO PERSUADE THE LAD THAT YOU WERE HIS DEAD INAMORATA RE-INCARNATE-- HE WAS HALF-CONVINCED OF IT FROM THE MOMENT YOU MET.

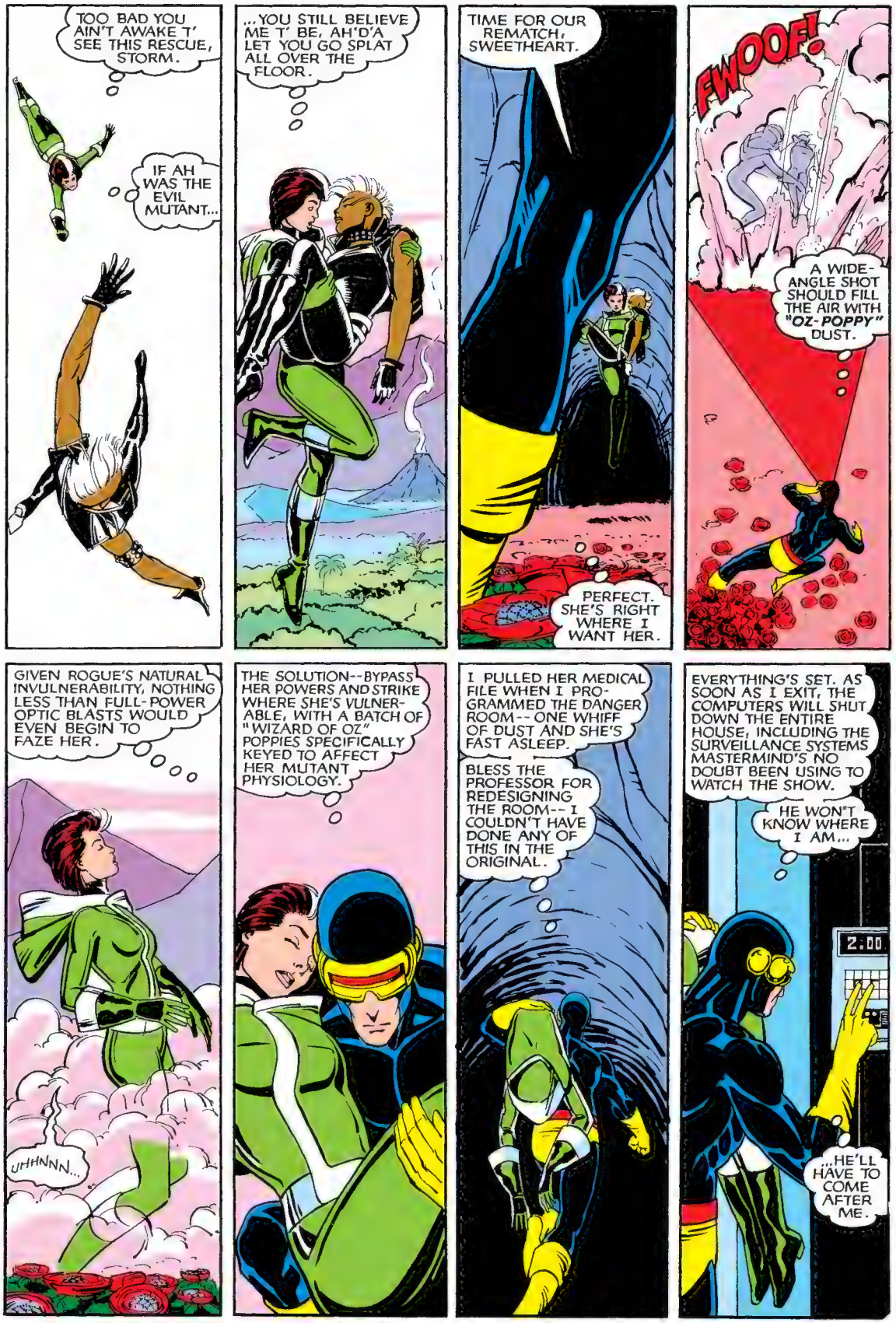

I MUST CONFESS, MADELYNE, YOU ARE A LOVELY CREATURE. IT'S ALMOST A SHAME TO SACRIFICE YOU, WHEN WE COULD MAKE SUCH BEAUTIFUL MUSIC TOGETHER.
MAGIC.
S-SCOTT???
HOW DID YOU GET HERE?!
QUIT JOKING, WE'RE IN TERRIBLE DANGER! A MAN NAMED MASTERMIND IS HERE--SCOTT?!!
WITH A MOCKING, DEVIL-MAY-CARE LAUGH, SCOTT PULLS MADELYNE CLOSE AND KISSES HER.

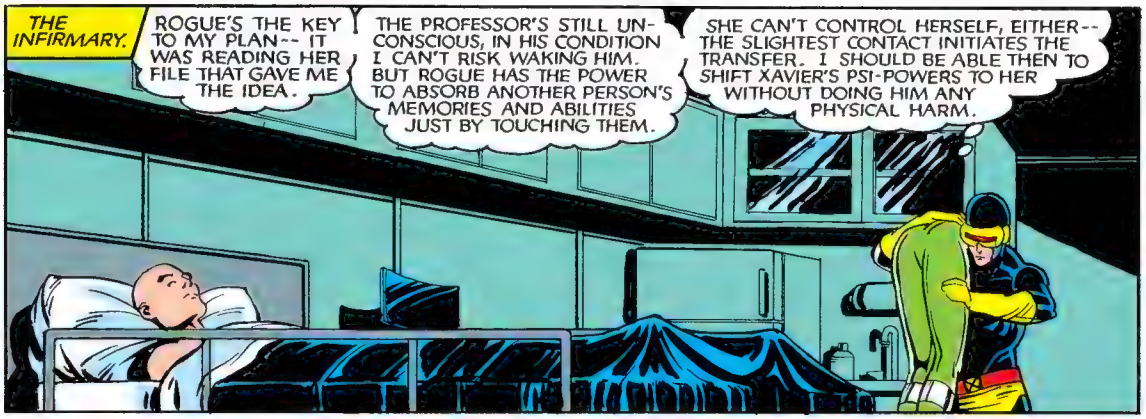

DESPITE HERSELF, SHE RESPONDS, MATCHING HIS CONSIDERABLE PASSION...
... UNTIL...
SURPRISE. I USED TO LOOK LIKE THIS, BUT I PREFER THE WYNGARDE PHYSIOGNOMY. HAD I WISHED, THOUGH...
... I COULD HAVE MADE YOU LOVE ME, WHATEVER MY APPEARANCE. I MAY YET DO SO. WON'T THAT BE FUN?

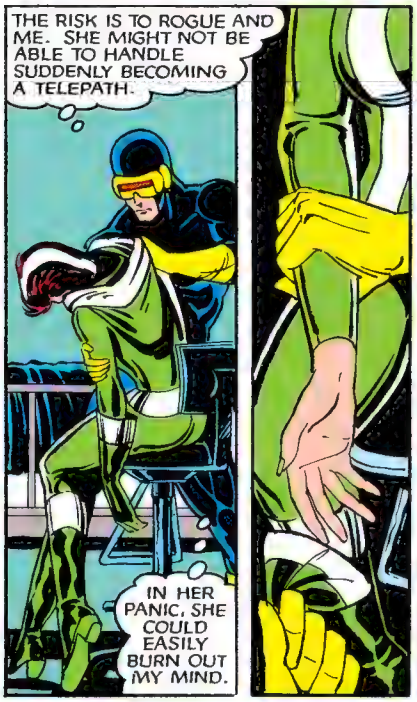

AND, IN THE DANGER ROOM, CYCLOPS RUNS...
... FOR HIS LIFE.
I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT NIGHTCRAWLER TELEPORTING OR KITTY PHASING IN FRONT OF ME...
... AND THE DENSE JUNGLE UNDERGROWTH WILL NOT ONLY SLOW MY PURSUERS ON THE GROUND, IT'LL KEEP ROGUE AND STORM FROM SPOTTING ME FROM THE AIR.
I DARE NOT GET OVERCONFIDENT, THOUGH. I MAY HAVE PROGRAMMED THIS SIMULATION BUT I'M AS MUCH A PART OF IT AS THE X-MEN. IF I'M NOT CAREFUL, I CAN BE CLOBBERED AS EASILY AS THEM.
ALSO, THE ROOM REALLY ISN'T THAT BIG-- I CAN'T RUN OR HIDE FOREVER.
I DON'T INTEND TO.
CAN YOU SCENT OUR QUARRY, TOVARISCH?
FLAMIN' ROOM'S NEUTRALIZED MY SENSE O' SMELL. BUT JEANNIE AIN'T EXACTLY BOTHERIN' T' HIDE HER SCENT.
HOW CONSIDERATE OF HER.
YAH! WATCH YOURSELF, PAL.
HE'S NOT THE PRIMARY THREAT TO ME, WOLVERINE.
YOU ARE.
AMBUSH!
SKRAM!


THAT TAKES CARE OF WOLVERINE-- BUT NOT FOR VERY LONG. I'VE GOT NO TIME TO WASTE.
THE IDEA IS TO KEEP THE X-MEN OFF MY BACK, BUT STILL LEAVE THEM ABLE TO FIGHT BY MY SIDE WHEN I FINALLY CONFRONT MASTERMIND.
WHY DO YOU RUN, MURDERESS?!
FACE ME! SURELY I AM NOT THAT FORMIDABLE A FOE.
YOU'LL DO 'TIL ONE COMES ALONG, COLOSSUS. THAT SHOT I TOOK FROM YOU PRETTY NEAR FINISHED ME.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I PUSHED MYSELF THIS HARD-- I'M OUT OF SHAPE...
...EVEN WITHOUT MY CRACKED RIBS-- AND IT'S COSTING ME. I'M SLOWING DOWN--LOSING STRENGTH AND AGILITY!
TRY AS YOU MIGHT--
--YOU WILL NOT ESCAPE OUR VENGEANCE!
WANNA BET, BIG FELLA?
RRRIP!
BOZHE MOI-- QUICKSAND!
SO FAR, SO GOOD...

... BUT THE LAST LAP'S THE HARDEST.
THAT CAVE'S THE EXIT-- MY ILLUSIONS WORK AGAINST ME NOW. IT'S BARELY A DOZEN YARDS AWAY, YET IT SEEMS LIKE MILES.
I CAN'T MOVE TOO FAST, EITHER, I WANT TO BE SPOTTED.
MY BREATHING MASK'S IN PLACE -- A WIND, RISING BEHIND ME!
STORM!
HERS IS THE LONG-RANGE POWER-- SHE'LL STRIKE FIRST, PROBABLY WITH LIGHTNING.
HERE IT COMES!
PHOENIX CAN FLY-- WHY DOES SHE REMAIN ON THE GROUND?!
IS THIS SOME PERVERSE GAME? OR COULD THERE BE SOME OTHER EXPLANATION?
MISSED! BUT ONLY BARELY! I MIS-TIMED MY MOVE--THAT BOLT SHOULD HAVE FRIED ME!
BUT STORM HESITATED FRACTIONALLY, SHE THREW IT OFF-TARGET! IS SHE SEEING THROUGH WYNGARDE'S DECEPTION, HAS SHE BEGUN TO DOUBT?!
GOT HER!


TOO BAD YOU AIN'T AWAKE T' SEE THIS RESCUE, STORM.
IF AH WAS THE EVIL MUTANT...
...YOU STILL BELIEVE ME T' BE, AH'D'A LET YOU GO SPLAT ALL OVER THE FLOOR.
TIME FOR OUR REMATCH, SWEETHEART.
PERFECT. SHE'S RIGHT WHERE I WANT HER.
FWOOF!
A WIDE-ANGLE SHOT SHOULD FILL THE AIR WITH "OZ-POPPY" DUST.
GIVEN ROGUE'S NATURAL INVULNERABILITY, NOTHING LESS THAN FULL-POWER OPTIC BLASTS WOULD EVEN BEGIN TO FAZE HER.
UHHNNN...
THE SOLUTION--BYPASS HER POWERS AND STRIKE WHERE SHE'S VULNERABLE, WITH A BATCH OF "WIZARD OF OZ" POPPIES SPECIFICALLY KEYED TO AFFECT HER MUTANT PHYSIOLOGY.
I PULLED HER MEDICAL FILE WHEN I PROGRAMMED THE DANGER ROOM--ONE WHIFF OF DUST AND SHE'S FAST ASLEEP.
BLESS THE PROFESSOR FOR REDESIGNING THE ROOM--I COULDN'T HAVE DONE ANY OF THIS IN THE ORIGINAL.
EVERYTHING'S SET. AS SOON AS I EXIT, THE COMPUTERS WILL SHUT DOWN THE ENTIRE HOUSE, INCLUDING THE SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS MASTERMIND'S NO DOUBT BEEN USING TO WATCH THE SHOW.
HE WON'T KNOW WHERE I AM...
2:00
...HE'LL HAVE TO COME AFTER ME.

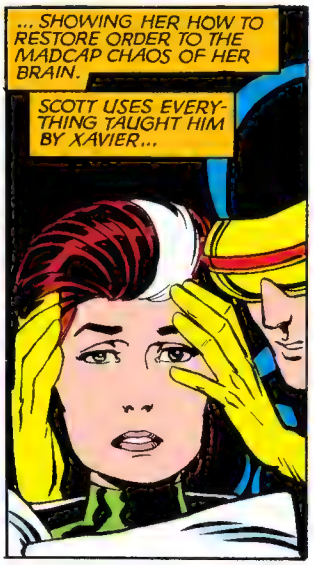

THE INFIRMARY.
ROGUE'S THE KEY TO MY PLAN-- IT WAS READING HER FILE THAT GAVE ME THE IDEA.
THE PROFESSOR'S STILL UNCONSCIOUS, IN HIS CONDITION I CAN'T RISK WAKING HIM. BUT ROGUE HAS THE POWER TO ABSORB ANOTHER PERSON'S MEMORIES AND ABILITIES JUST BY TOUCHING THEM.
SHE CAN'T CONTROL HERSELF, EITHER-- THE SLIGHTEST CONTACT INITIATES THE TRANSFER. I SHOULD BE ABLE THEN TO SHIFT XAVIER'S PSI-POWERS TO HER WITHOUT DOING HIM ANY PHYSICAL HARM.


THE RISK IS TO ROGUE AND ME. SHE MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO HANDLE SUDDENLY BECOMING A TELEPATH.
IN HER PANIC, SHE COULD EASILY BURN OUT MY MIND.

UNFORTUNATELY, I CAN'T SEE ANY ALTERNATIVE.
POP!
WHUNH--!??!

HERE WE GO!
NO!
HER SCREAM MIXES RAGE AND TERROR...
...AS HER WORLD SHATTERS.

THOUGHTS, EMOTIONS, LIVES--NONE HER OWN-- FLOOD HER BRAIN. SHE IS DROWNING, LOSING ALL SENSE OF SELF, TUMBLING GRATEFULLY TOWARDS OBLIVION.
ONE VOICE MAKES ITSELF HEARD ABOVE THE MULTITUDE-- GENTLE BUT UNYIELDING...


...SHOWING HER HOW TO RESTORE ORDER TO THE MADCAP CHAOS OF HER BRAIN.
SCOTT USES EVERYTHING TAUGHT HIM BY XAVIER...

...EVERYTHING LEARNED THROUGH THE PSYCHIC RAPPORT HE SHARED WITH JEAN GREY. THE STRAIN IS TERRIBLE, THE PAIN WORSE--
--MADE NO LESS SO BECAUSE IT IS SHARED.

Y'WANT'A PUT THE KID DOWN, DARLIN'.
WOLVERINE--ALL OF YOU--YOU MUST NOT BELIEVE WHAT YOU SEE!
YOUR SENSES--YOUR THOUGHTS--ARE PLAYING YOU FALSE. YOU'RE BEING TRICKED!
IF I'M PHOENIX, WHY AM I BOTHERING TALKING TO YOU?
WHY RUN FROM YOU?!
I'VE GIVEN ROGUE XAVIER'S PSI-POWERS. I'LL OPEN MY MIND TO HER.
LET HER TOUCH YOUR THOUGHTS AS WELL. YOU'LL SEE THE TRUTH.
CYKE, NO! SUPPOSE AH MAKE A MISTAKE, OR THEY DON'T BELIEVE ME?! AH STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT AH'M DOIN'--!
RELAX, ROGUE. FOLLOW MY LEAD, YOU'LL BE OKAY. A MINDLINK ALREADY EXISTS BETWEEN US--SIMPLY EXPAND IT TO INCLUDE THE OTHERS...
YOU'RE NOT FACIN' PHOENIX, X-MEN.
THAT IS ROGUE'S VOICE--IN MY HEAD!
HIYA, PETE!
IT'S CYCLOPS, CAN'T'CHA SEE?! WE'VE BEEN SUCKERED!
HOW DO WE KNOW THIS AIN'T A TRICK?
BECAUSE, LITTLE MAN...

... THE TRICKSTER'S RIGHT BEHIND YOU.

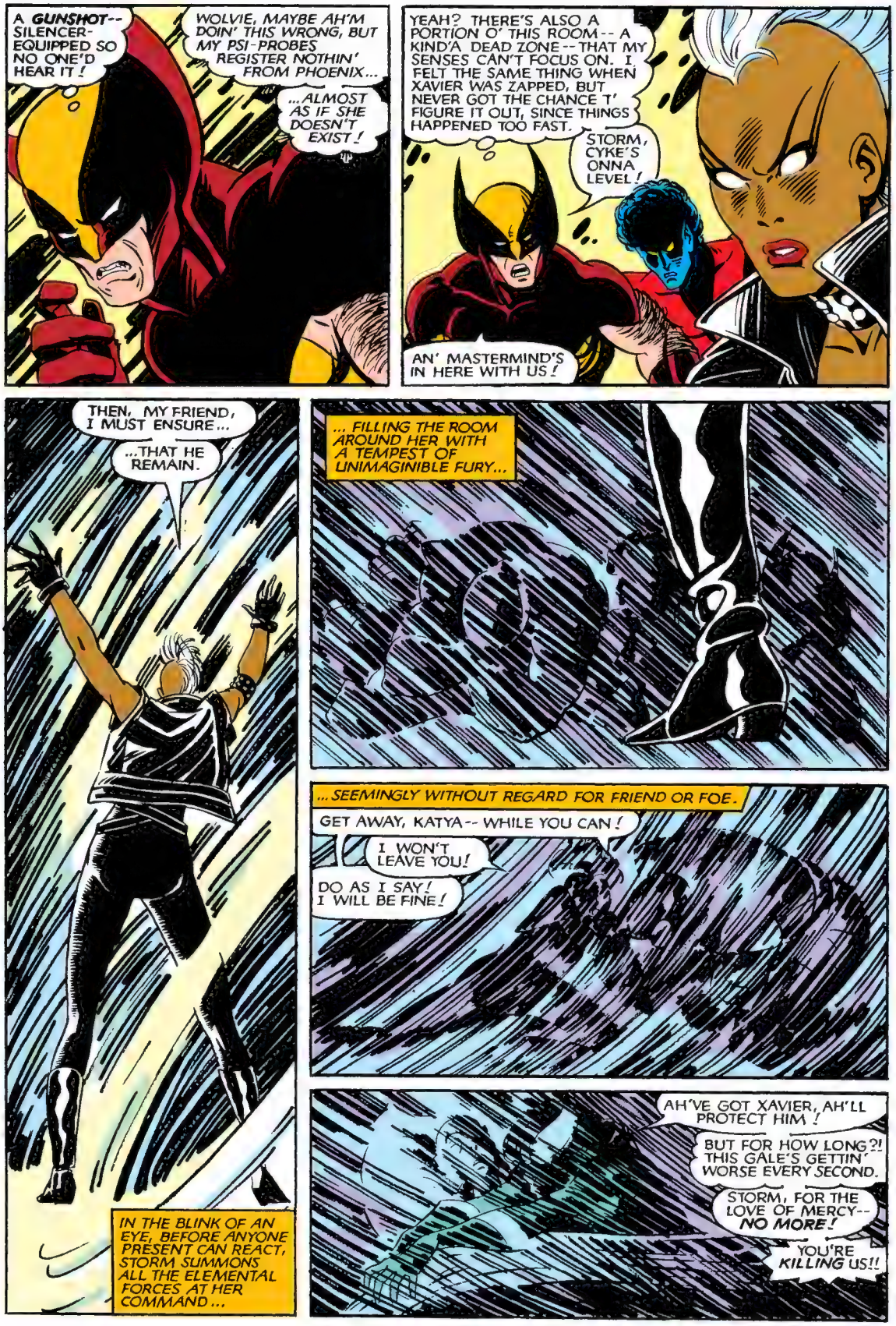
NO DICE, MASTERMIND. THE GAME'S OVER. YOUR PHOENIX CAN NO MORE FOOL US...
...THAN HARM US.

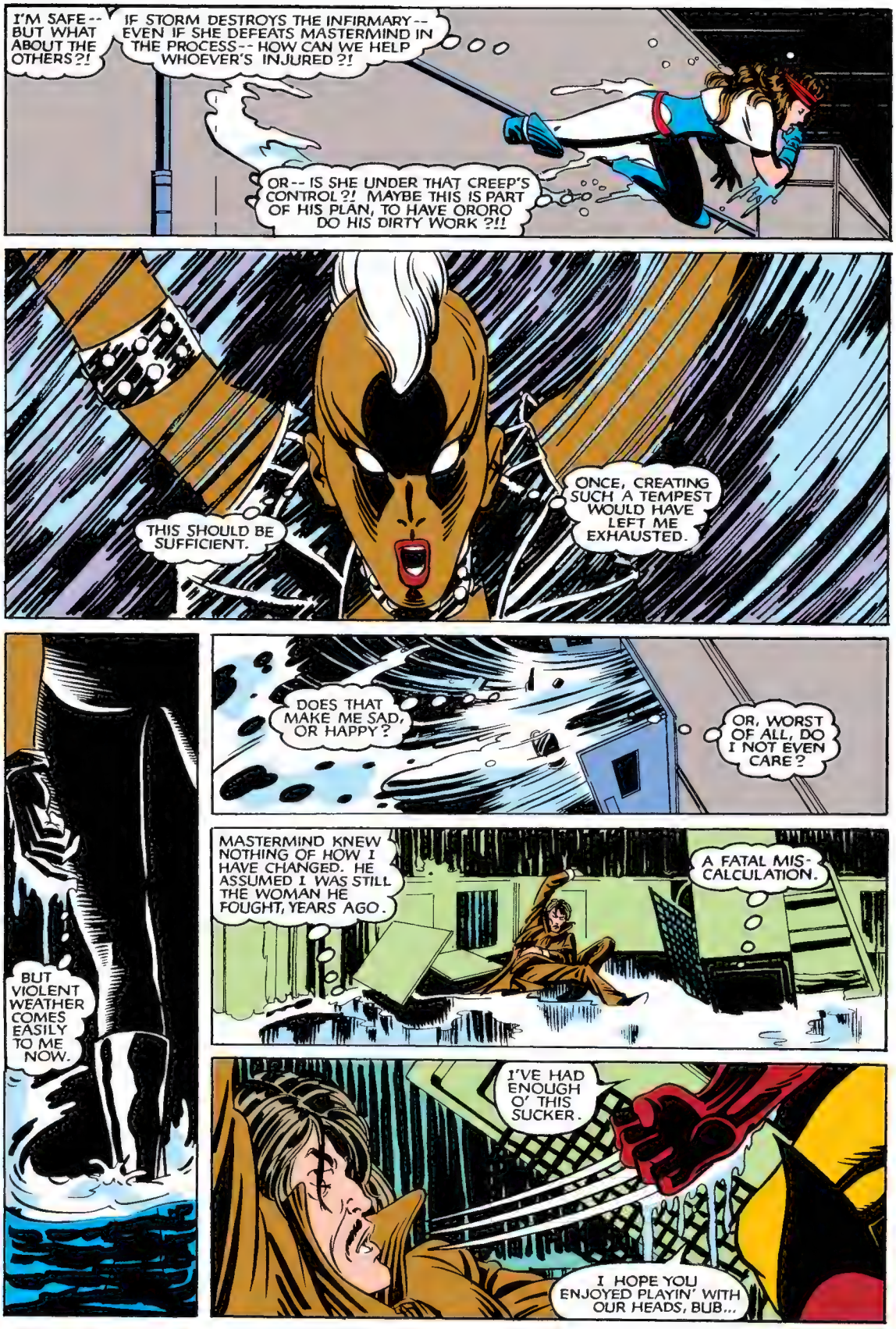
BRAVE WORDS, MY LOVE.

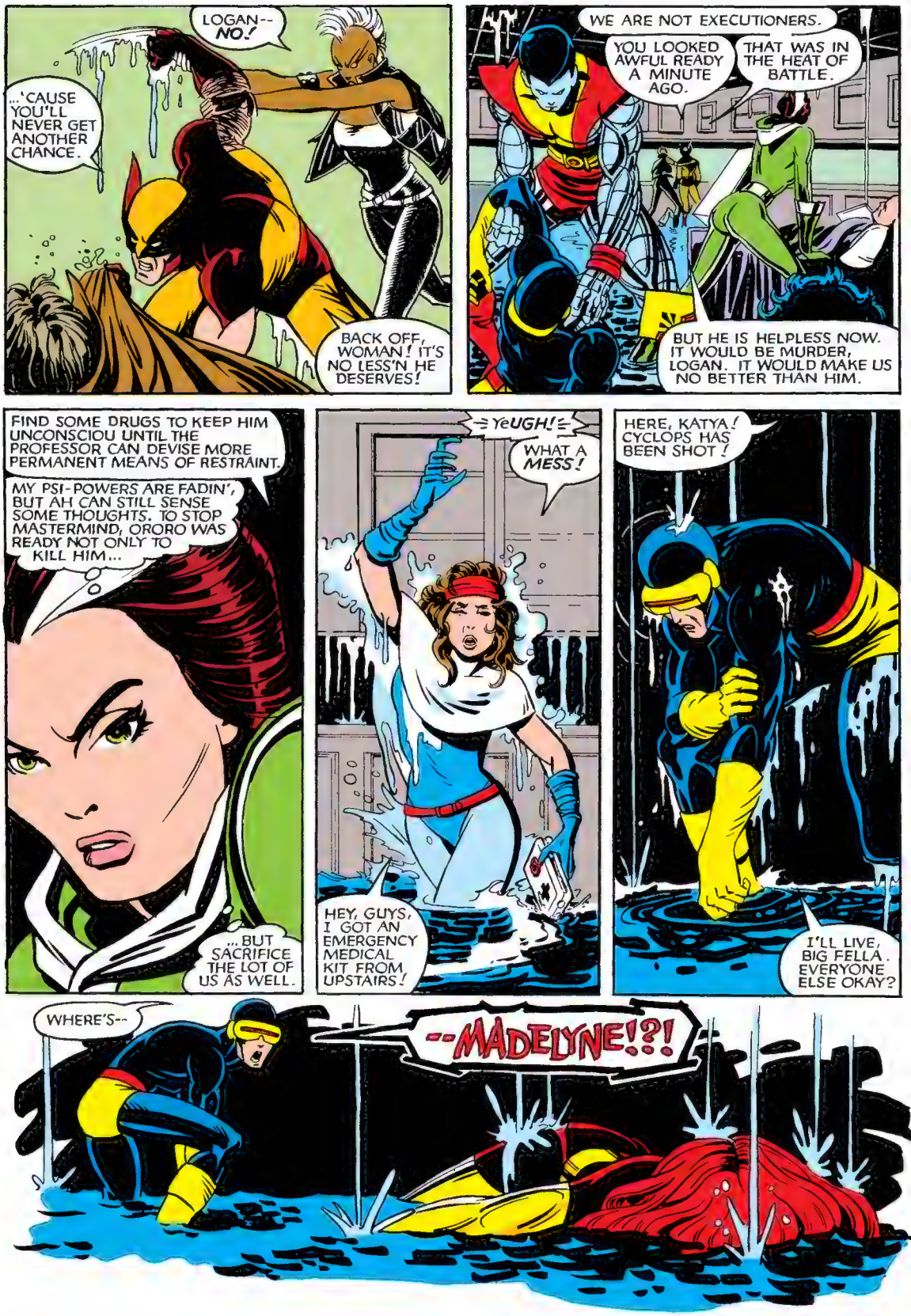
YOU'RE AN ILLUSION, A FAKE! YOU CAN ONLY HURT US...
... IF WE LET YOU.

SEE?!
Ahhh-- BUT SUPPOSE, FROM THE HEART OF THE SUPPOSED ILLUSION, THERE COMES...
... A MOST DEADLY PIECE OF REALITY?

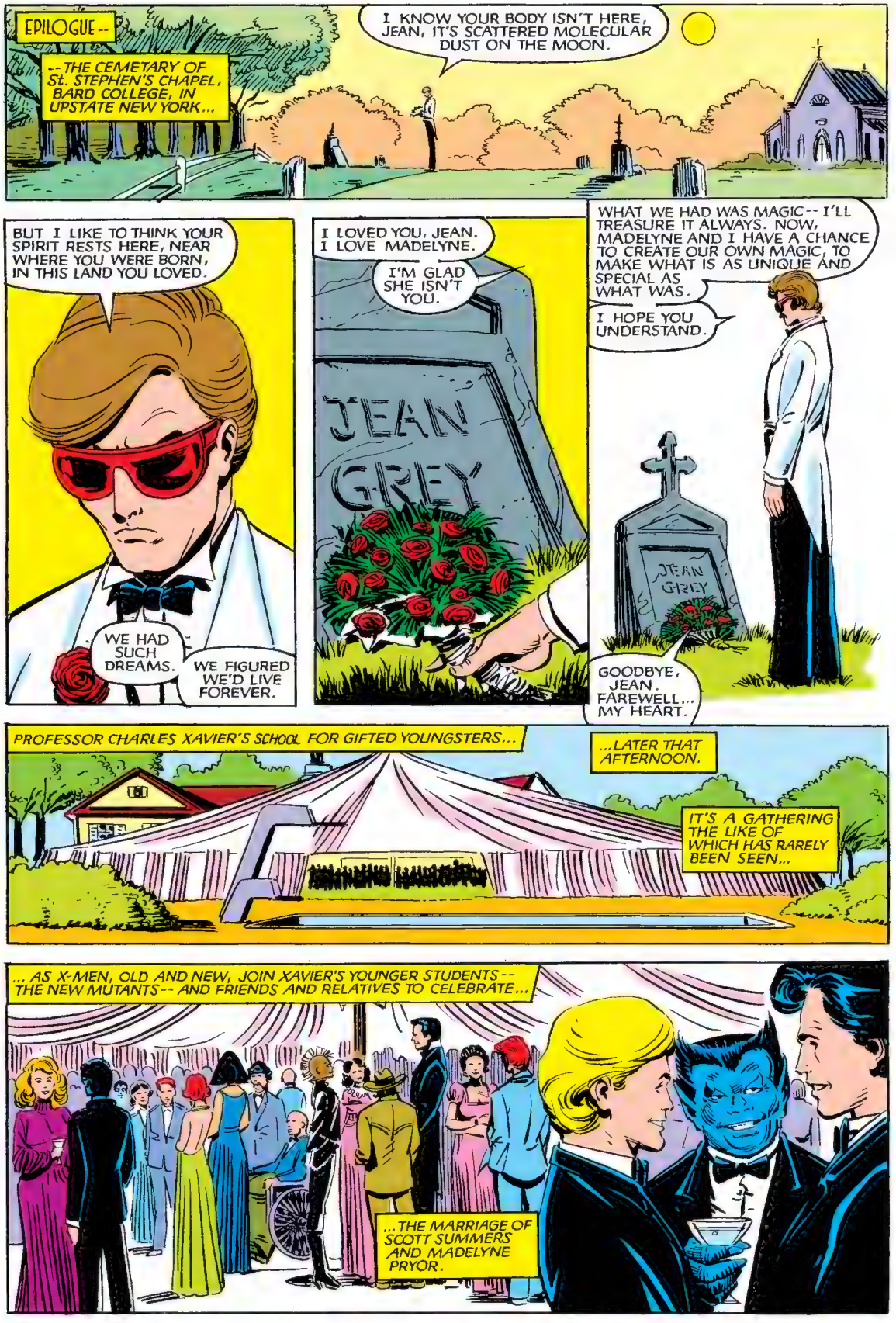
PHUT!
GNUNHH!

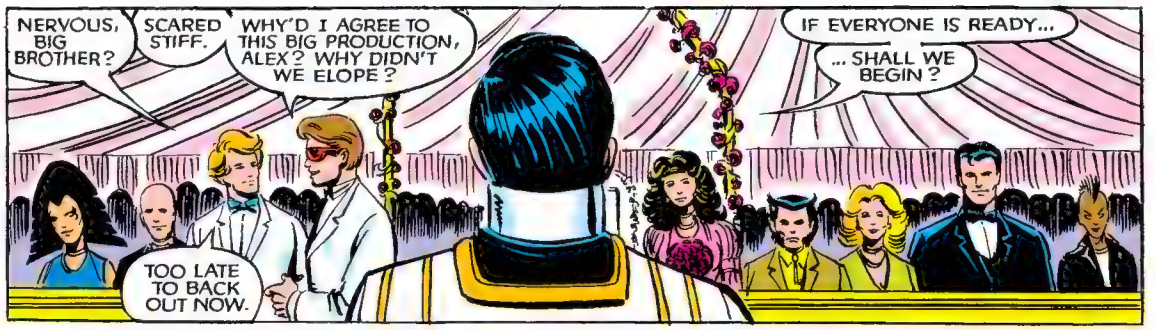

A GUNSHOT-- SILENCER-EQUIPPED SO NO ONE'D HEAR IT!
WOLVIE, MAYBE AH'M DOIN' THIS WRONG, BUT MY PSI-PROBES REGISTER NOTHIN' FROM PHOENIX...
...ALMOST AS IF SHE DOESN'T EXIST!
YEAH? THERE'S ALSO A PORTION O' THIS ROOM -- A KIND'A DEAD ZONE -- THAT MY SENSES CAN'T FOCUS ON. I FELT THE SAME THING WHEN XAVIER WAS ZAPPED, BUT NEVER GOT THE CHANCE T' FIGURE IT OUT, SINCE THINGS HAPPENED TOO FAST.
STORM, CYKE'S ONNA LEVEL!
AN' MASTERMIND'S IN HERE WITH US!
THEN, MY FRIEND, I MUST ENSURE...
...THAT HE REMAIN.
IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, BEFORE ANYONE PRESENT CAN REACT, STORM SUMMONS ALL THE ELEMENTAL FORCES AT HER COMMAND...
...FILLING THE ROOM AROUND HER WITH A TEMPEST OF UNIMAGINIBLE FURY...
...SEEMINGLY WITHOUT REGARD FOR FRIEND OR FOE.
GET AWAY, KATYA -- WHILE YOU CAN!
I WON'T LEAVE YOU!
DO AS I SAY! I WILL BE FINE!
AH'VE GOT XAVIER, AH'LL PROTECT HIM!
BUT FOR HOW LONG?! THIS GALE'S GETTIN' WORSE EVERY SECOND.
STORM, FOR THE LOVE OF MERCY-- NO MORE!
YOU'RE KILLING US!!

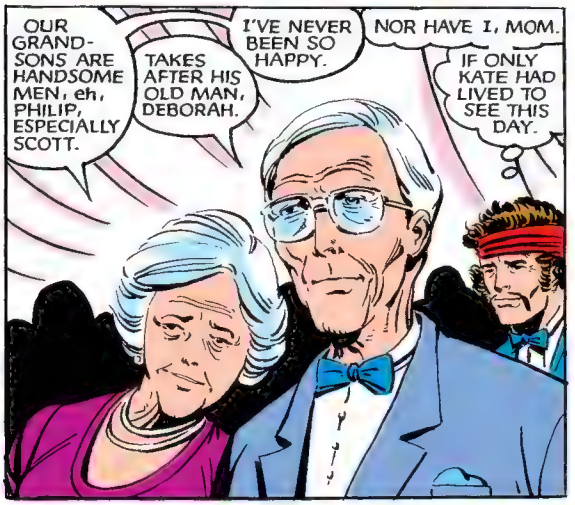

I'M SAFE-- BUT WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS?!
IF STORM DESTROYS THE INFIRMARY-- EVEN IF SHE DEFEATS MASTERMIND IN THE PROCESS-- HOW CAN WE HELP WHOEVER'S INJURED?!
OR-- IS SHE UNDER THAT CREEP'S CONTROL?! MAYBE THIS IS PART OF HIS PLAN, TO HAVE ORORO DO HIS DIRTY WORK?!!
THIS SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT.
ONCE, CREATING SUCH A TEMPEST WOULD HAVE LEFT ME EXHAUSTED.
BUT VIOLENT WEATHER COMES EASILY TO ME NOW.
DOES THAT MAKE ME SAD, OR HAPPY?
OR, WORST OF ALL, DO I NOT EVEN CARE?
MASTERMIND KNEW NOTHING OF HOW I HAVE CHANGED. HE ASSUMED I WAS STILL THE WOMAN HE FOUGHT, YEARS AGO.
A FATAL MIS-CALCULATION.
I'VE HAD ENOUGH O' THIS SUCKER.
I HOPE YOU ENJOYED PLAYIN' WITH OUR HEADS, BUB...

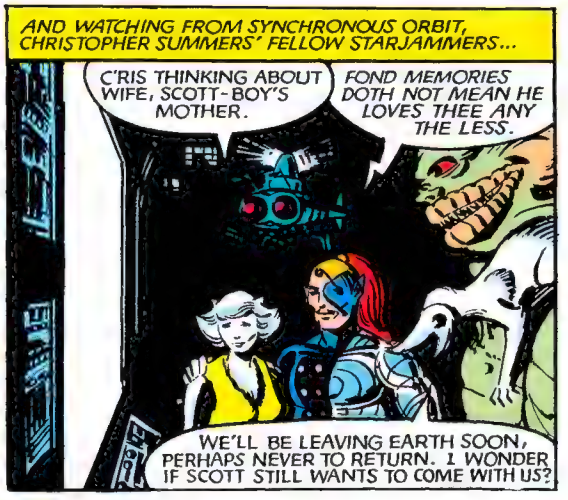

LOGAN-- NO!
...'CAUSE YOU'LL NEVER GET ANOTHER CHANCE.
BACK OFF, WOMAN! IT'S NO LESS'N HE DESERVES!
WE ARE NOT EXECUTIONERS.
YOU LOOKED AWFUL READY A MINUTE AGO.
THAT WAS IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE.
BUT HE IS HELPLESS NOW. IT WOULD BE MURDER, LOGAN. IT WOULD MAKE US NO BETTER THAN HIM.
FIND SOME DRUGS TO KEEP HIM UNCONSCIOU UNTIL THE PROFESSOR CAN DEVISE MORE PERMANENT MEANS OF RESTRAINT.
MY PSI-POWERS ARE FADIN', BUT AH CAN STILL SENSE SOME THOUGHTS. TO STOP MASTERMIND, ORORO WAS READY NOT ONLY TO KILL HIM...
... BUT SACRIFICE THE LOT OF US AS WELL.
=YeUGH!=
WHAT A MESS!
HEY, GUYS, I GOT AN EMERGENCY MEDICAL KIT FROM UPSTAIRS!
HERE, KATYA! CYCLOPS HAS BEEN SHOT!
I'LL LIVE, BIG FELLA. EVERYONE ELSE OKAY?
WHERE'S--
--MADELYNE!?!

SHE'S LIMP-- NOT BREATHING-- I CAN'T FEEL A PULSE!
NO!
SHE CAN'T BE DEAD, I WON'T ALLOW IT!
I WAS FORCED TO STAND BY, HELPLESSLY, AND WATCH JEAN DIE. BUT NOT AGAIN!
BREATHE, MADELYNE-- C'MON, THAT'S MY LOVE-- I DRAGGED MYSELF BACK TO LIFE FOR YOU, DO THE SAME FOR ME.
BREATHE!
KOFF!
=Koff-- koff!=
S-SCOTT???
HERE, DARLING. I'M HERE.
HI.
HI, YOURSELF.

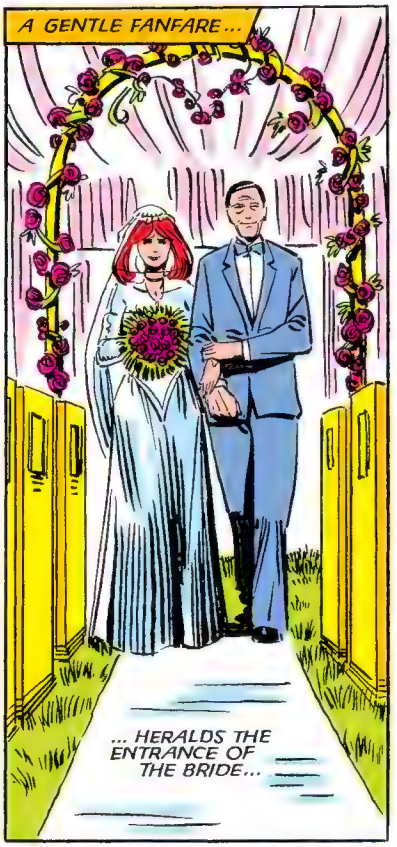

EPILOGUE--
--THE CEMETARY OF St. STEPHEN'S CHAPEL, BARD COLLEGE, IN UPSTATE NEW YORK...
I KNOW YOUR BODY ISN'T HERE, JEAN, IT'S SCATTERED MOLECULAR DUST ON THE MOON.
BUT I LIKE TO THINK YOUR SPIRIT RESTS HERE, NEAR WHERE YOU WERE BORN, IN THIS LAND YOU LOVED.
WE HAD SUCH DREAMS.
WE FIGURED WE'D LIVE FOREVER.
I LOVED YOU, JEAN. I LOVE MADELYNE.
I'M GLAD SHE ISN'T YOU.
JEAN GREY
WHAT WE HAD WAS MAGIC-- I'LL TREASURE IT ALWAYS. NOW, MADELYNE AND I HAVE A CHANCE TO CREATE OUR OWN MAGIC, TO MAKE WHAT IS AS UNIQUE AND SPECIAL AS WHAT WAS.
I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND.
JEAN GREY
GOODBYE, JEAN. FAREWELL... MY HEART.
PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER'S SCHOOL FOR GIFTED YOUNGSTERS...
...LATER THAT AFTERNOON.
IT'S A GATHERING THE LIKE OF WHICH HAS RARELY BEEN SEEN...
... AS X-MEN, OLD AND NEW, JOIN XAVIER'S YOUNGER STUDENTS-- THE NEW MUTANTS-- AND FRIENDS AND RELATIVES TO CELEBRATE...
...THE MARRIAGE OF SCOTT SUMMERS AND MADELYNE PRYOR.

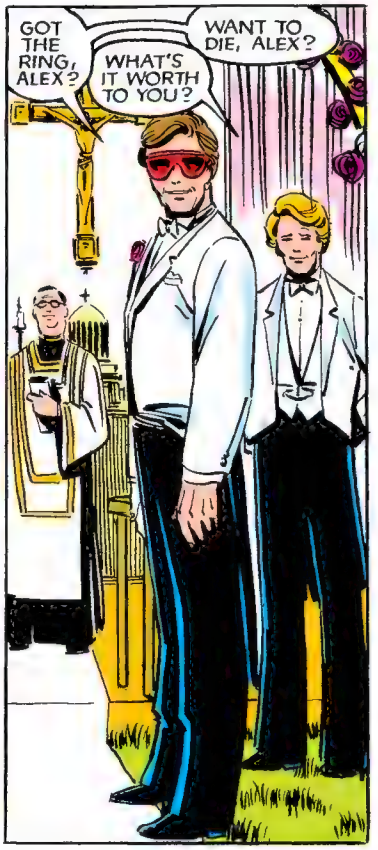

NERVOUS, BIG BROTHER?
SCARED STIFF.
WHY'D I AGREE TO THIS BIG PRODUCTION, ALEX? WHY DIDN'T WE ELOPE?
IF EVERYONE IS READY...
... SHALL WE BEGIN?
TOO LATE TO BACK OUT NOW.

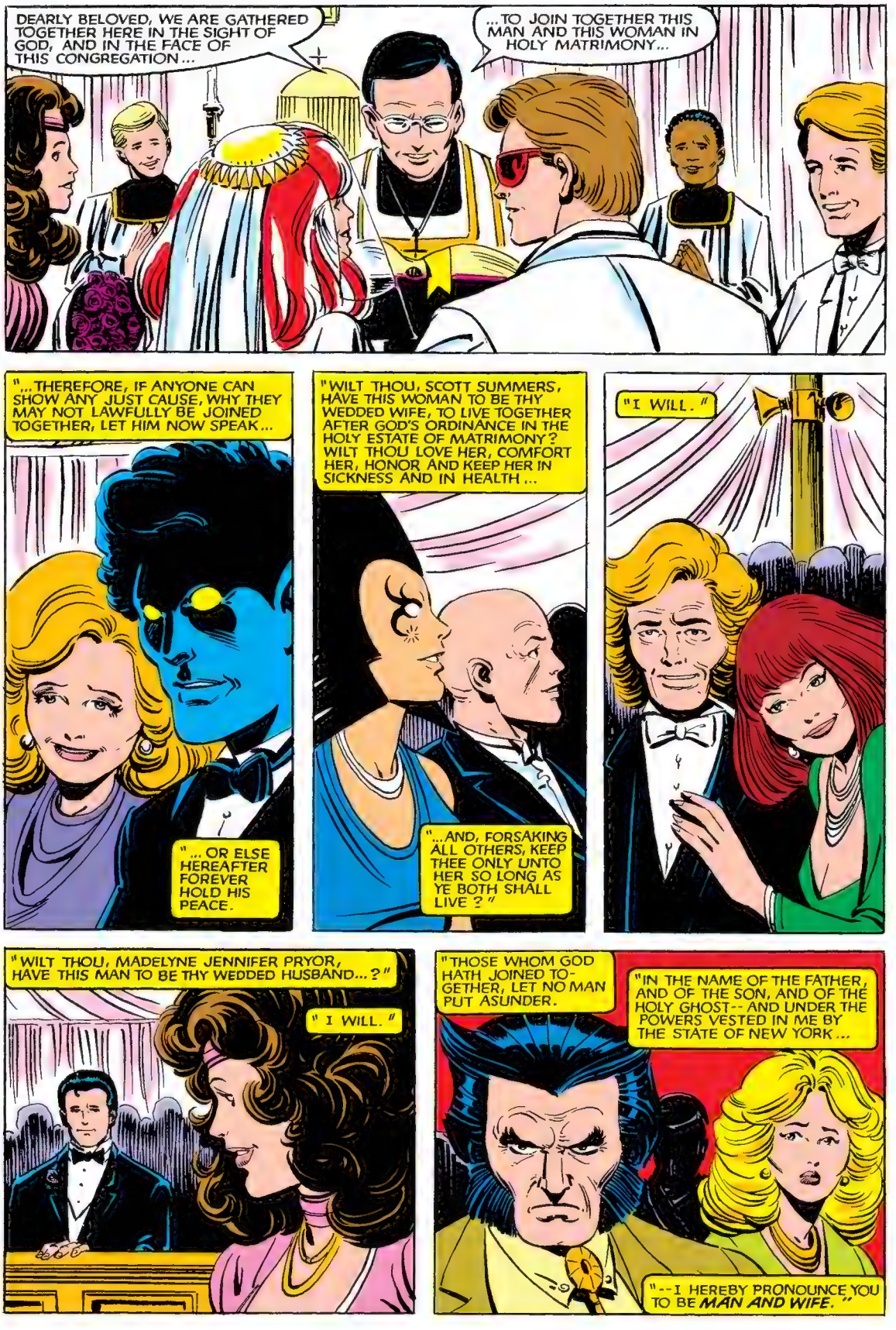

OUR GRAND-SONS ARE HANDSOME MEN, eh, PHILIP, ESPECIALLY SCOTT.
TAKES AFTER HIS OLD MAN, DEBORAH.
I'VE NEVER BEEN SO HAPPY.
NOR HAVE I, MOM.
IF ONLY KATE HAD LIVED TO SEE THIS DAY.

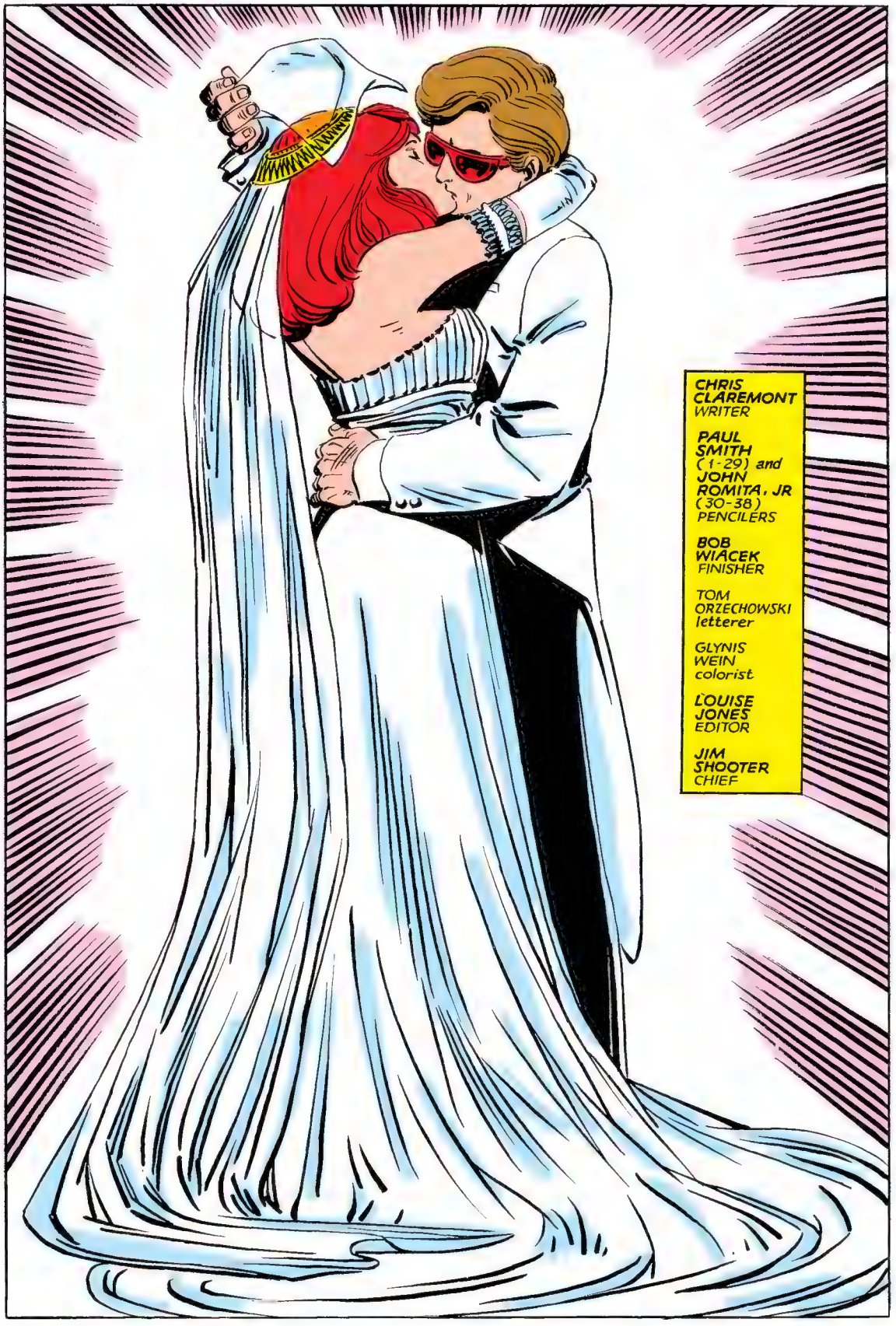

AND WATCHING FROM SYNCHRONOUS ORBIT, CHRISTOPHER SUMMERS' FELLOW STARJAMMERS...
C'RIS THINKING ABOUT WIFE, SCOTT-BOY'S MOTHER.
FOND MEMORIES DOTH NOT MEAN HE LOVES THEE ANY THE LESS.
WE'LL BE LEAVING EARTH SOON, PERHAPS NEVER TO RETURN. I WONDER IF SCOTT STILL WANTS TO COME WITH US?

MAID-OF-HONOR, HUH, KID. BETTER LUCK THIS TIME.
Oh, LOGAN, IT ISN'T FAIR. YOU LOVED LADY MARIKO SO MUCH, WHY DID SHE REFUSE YOU AT THE ALTAR?
I'D GIVE ANYTHING TO PUT THINGS RIGHT BETWEEN YOU TWO.


A GENTLE FANFARE...
... HERALDS THE ENTRANCE OF THE BRIDE...


GOT THE RING, ALEX?
WHAT'S IT WORTH TO YOU?
WANT TO DIE, ALEX?


DEARLY BELOVED, WE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER HERE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD, AND IN THE FACE OF THIS CONGREGATION...
...TO JOIN TOGETHER THIS MAN AND THIS WOMAN IN HOLY MATRIMONY...
"...THEREFORE, IF ANYONE CAN SHOW ANY JUST CAUSE, WHY THEY MAY NOT LAWFULLY BE JOINED TOGETHER, LET HIM NOW SPEAK...
"...OR ELSE HEREAFTER FOREVER HOLD HIS PEACE.
"WILT THOU, SCOTT SUMMERS, HAVE THIS WOMAN TO BE THY WEDDED WIFE, TO LIVE TOGETHER AFTER GOD'S ORDINANCE IN THE HOLY ESTATE OF MATRIMONY? WILT THOU LOVE HER, COMFORT HER, HONOR AND KEEP HER IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH...
"...AND, FORSAKING ALL OTHERS, KEEP THEE ONLY UNTO HER SO LONG AS YE BOTH SHALL LIVE?"
"I WILL."
"WILT THOU, MADELYNE JENNIFER PRYOR, HAVE THIS MAN TO BE THY WEDDED HUSBAND...?"
"I WILL."
"THOSE WHOM GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER, LET NO MAN PUT ASUNDER.
"IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST--AND UNDER THE POWERS VESTED IN ME BY THE STATE OF NEW YORK...
"--I HEREBY PRONOUNCE YOU TO BE MAN AND WIFE."



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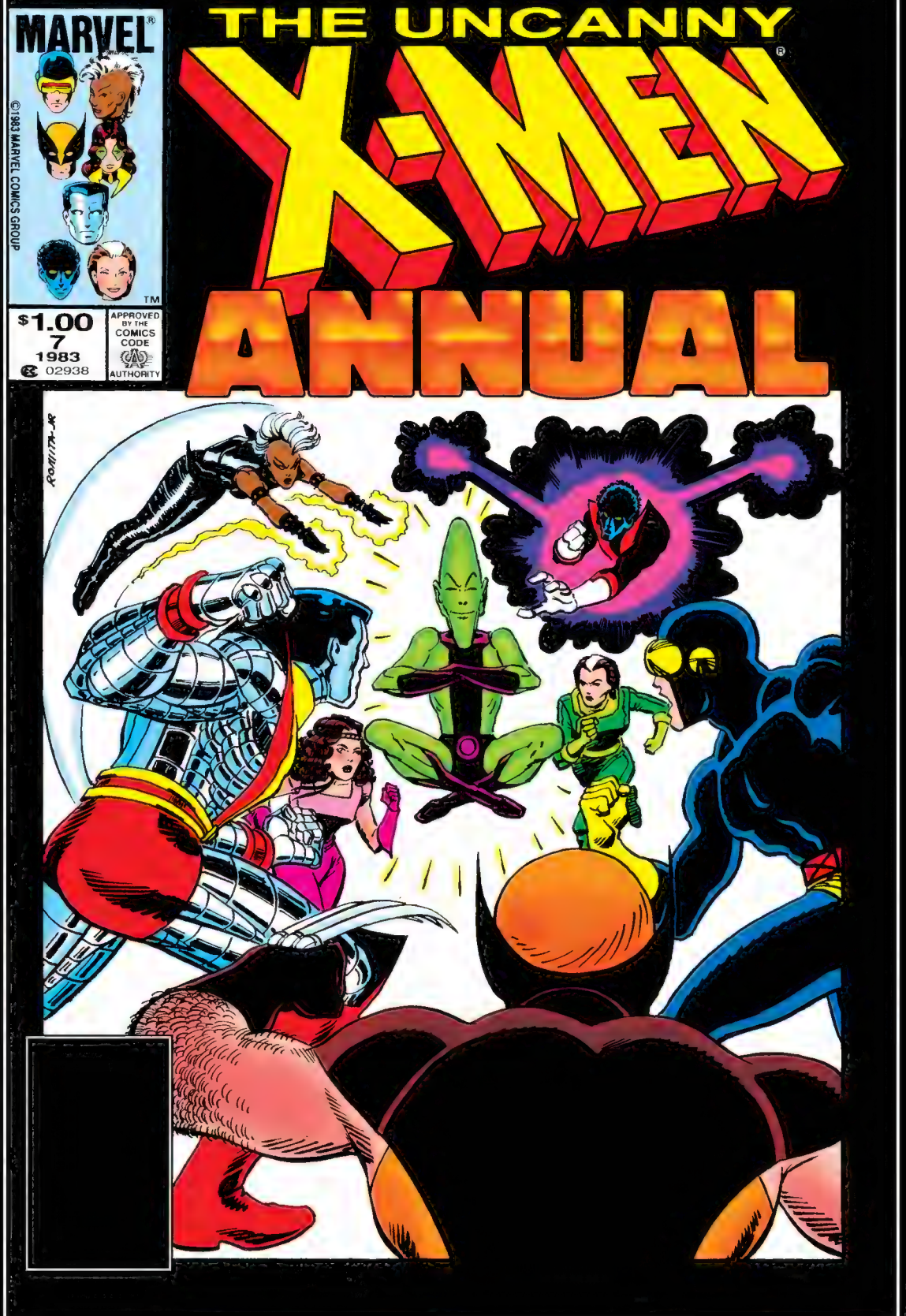
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THE UNCANNY
X-MEN
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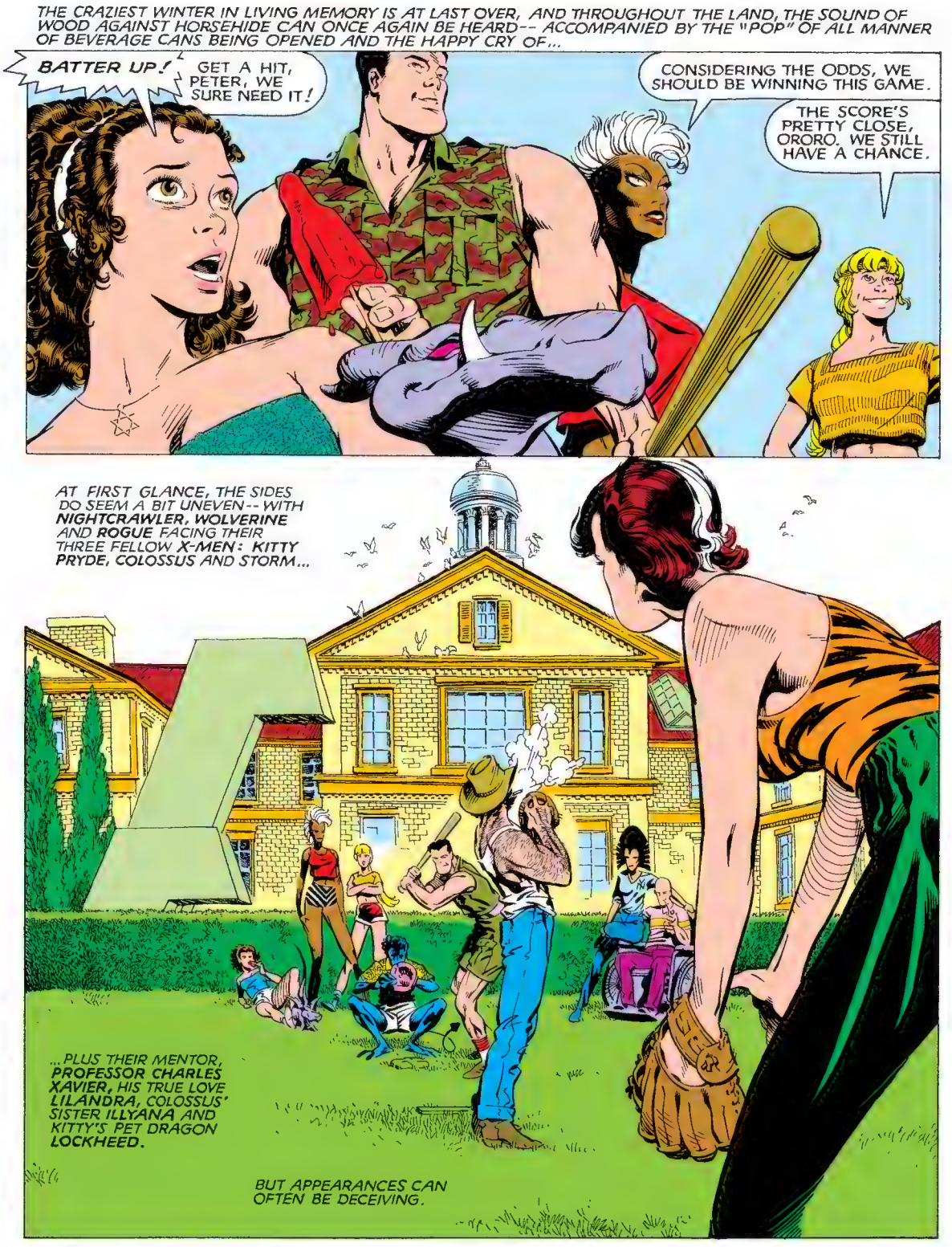
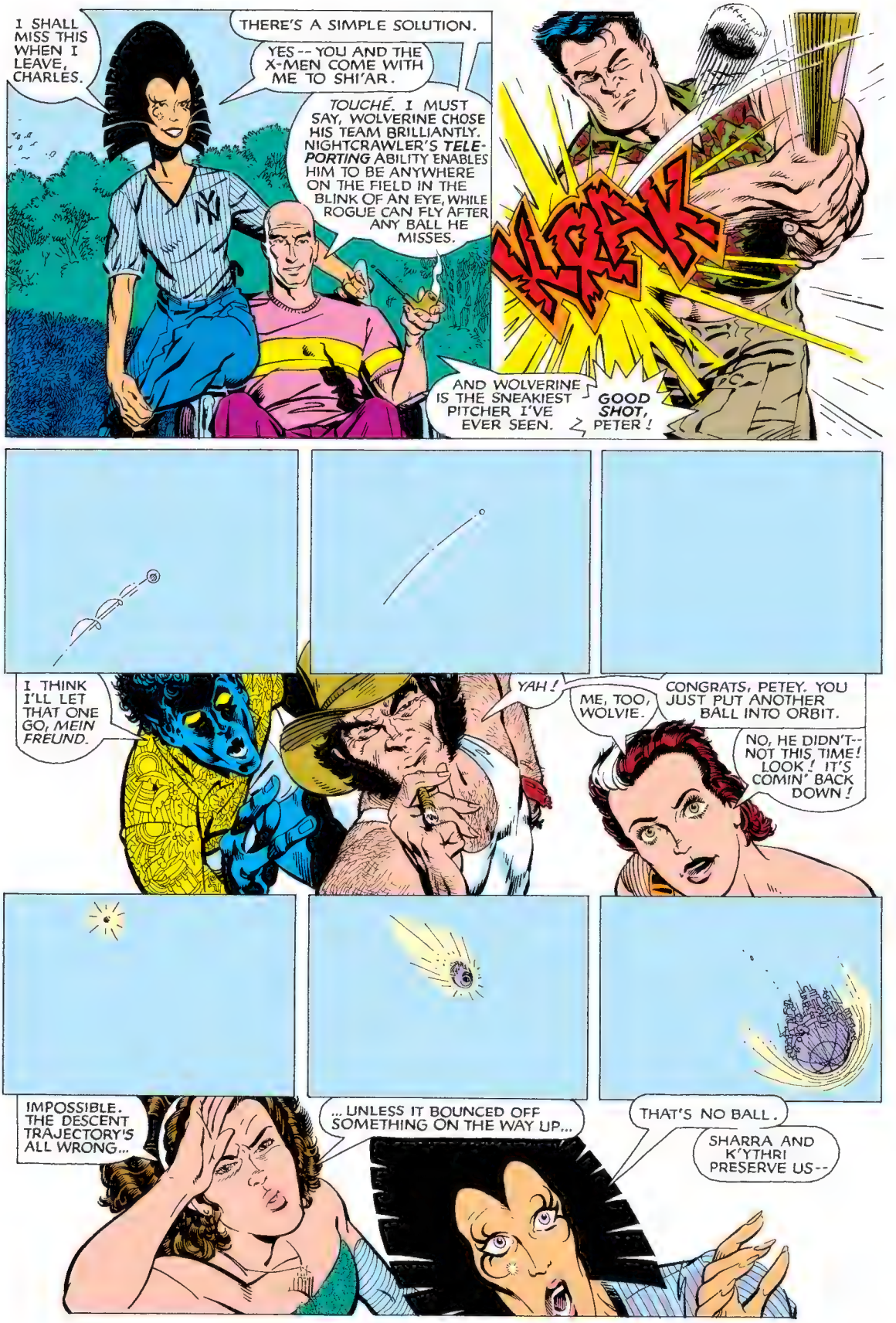
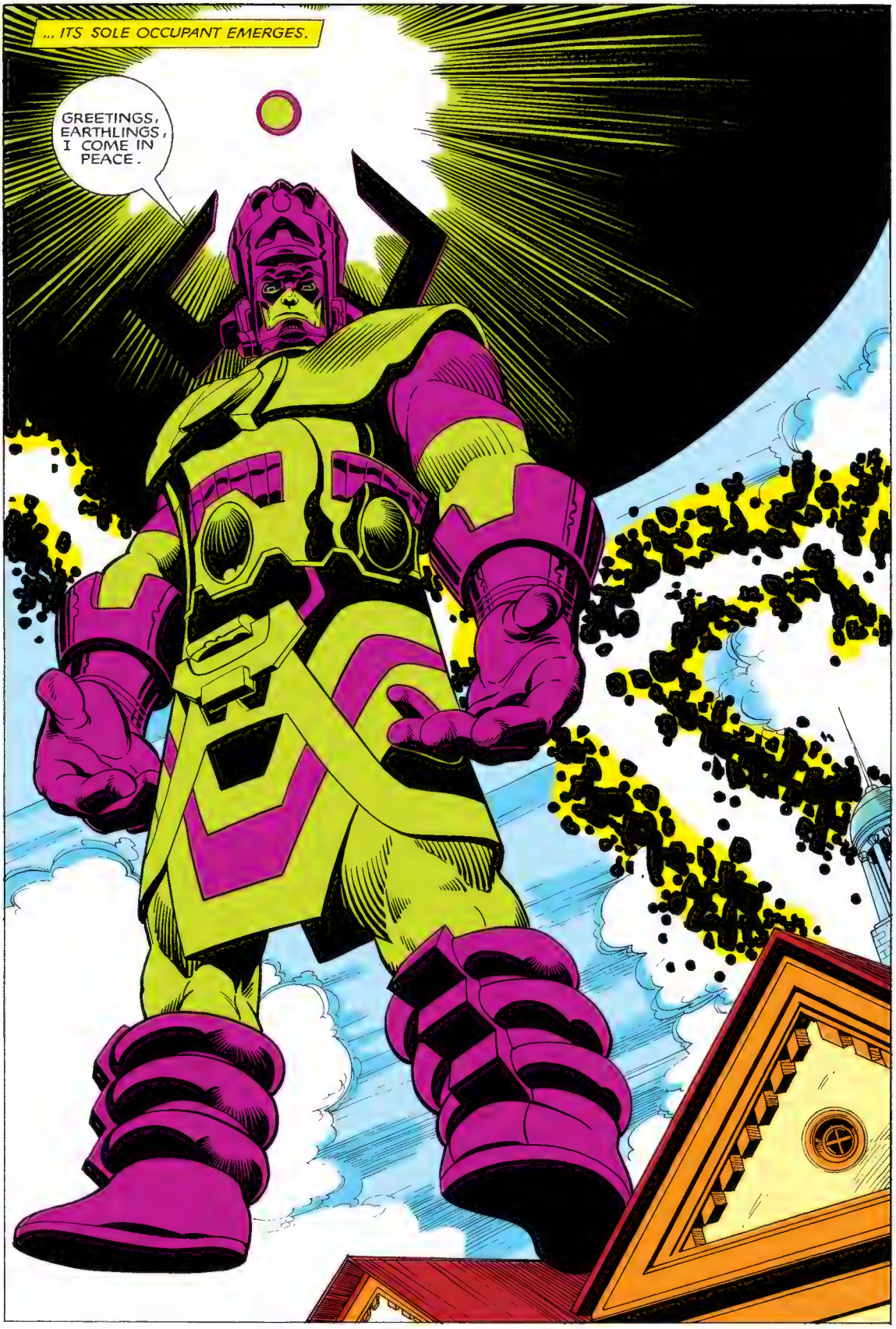
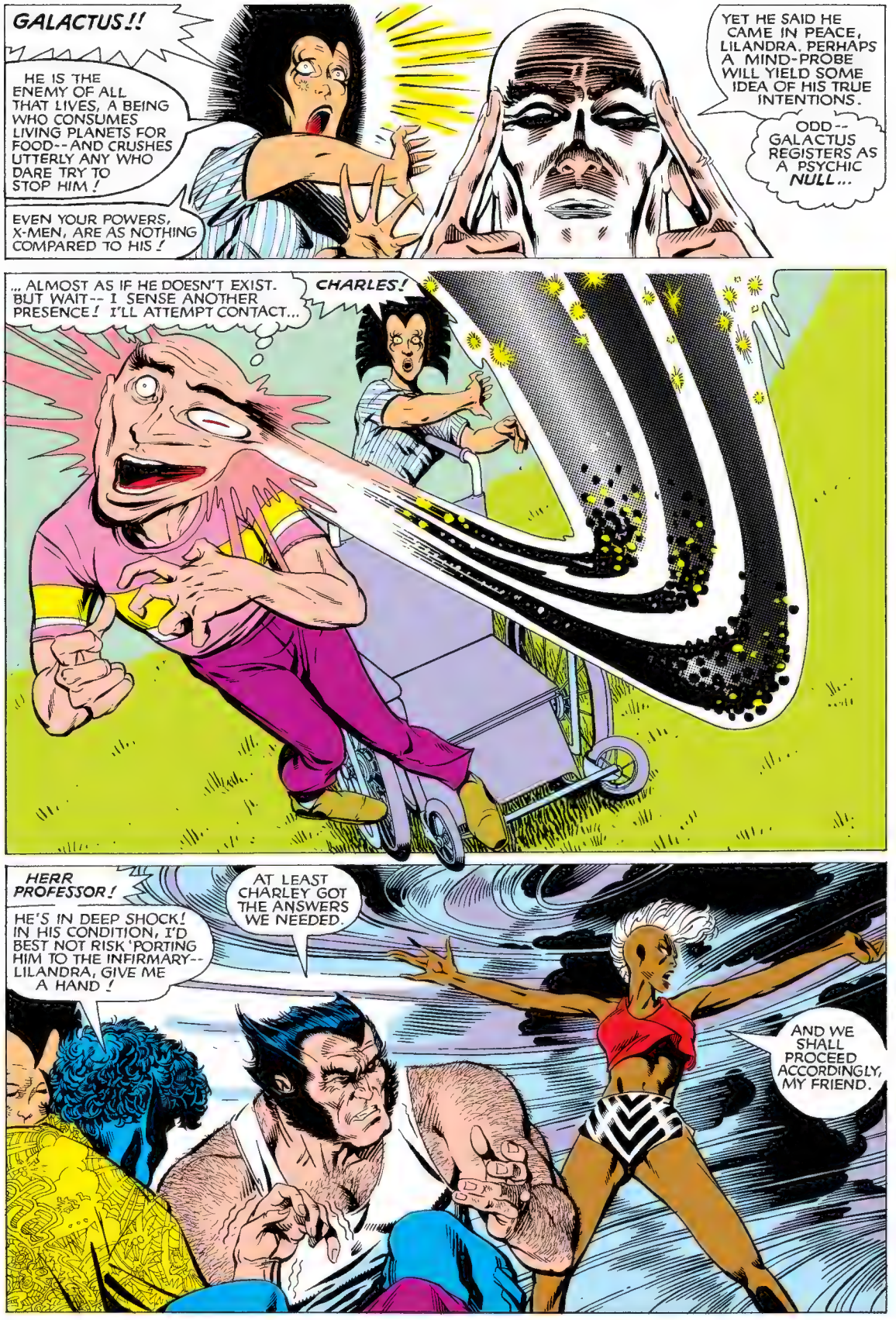

THE CRAZIEST WINTER IN LIVING MEMORY IS AT LAST OVER, AND THROUGHOUT THE LAND, THE SOUND OF WOOD AGAINST HORSEHIDE CAN ONCE AGAIN BE HEARD-- ACCOMPANIED BY THE "POP" OF ALL MANNER OF BEVERAGE CANS BEING OPENED AND THE HAPPY CRY OF...
BATTER UP!
GET A HIT, PETER, WE SURE NEED IT!
CONSIDERING THE ODDS, WE SHOULD BE WINNING THIS GAME.
THE SCORE'S PRETTY CLOSE, ORORO. WE STILL HAVE A CHANCE.
AT FIRST GLANCE, THE SIDES DO SEEM A BIT UNEVEN-- WITH NIGHTCRAWLER, WOLVERINE AND ROGUE FACING THEIR THREE FELLOW X-MEN: KITTY PRYDE, COLOSSUS AND STORM...
...PLUS THEIR MENTOR, PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER, HIS TRUE LOVE LILANDRA, COLOSSUS' SISTER ILLYANA AND KITTY'S PET DRAGON LOCKHEED.
BUT APPEARANCES CAN OFTEN BE DECEIVING.

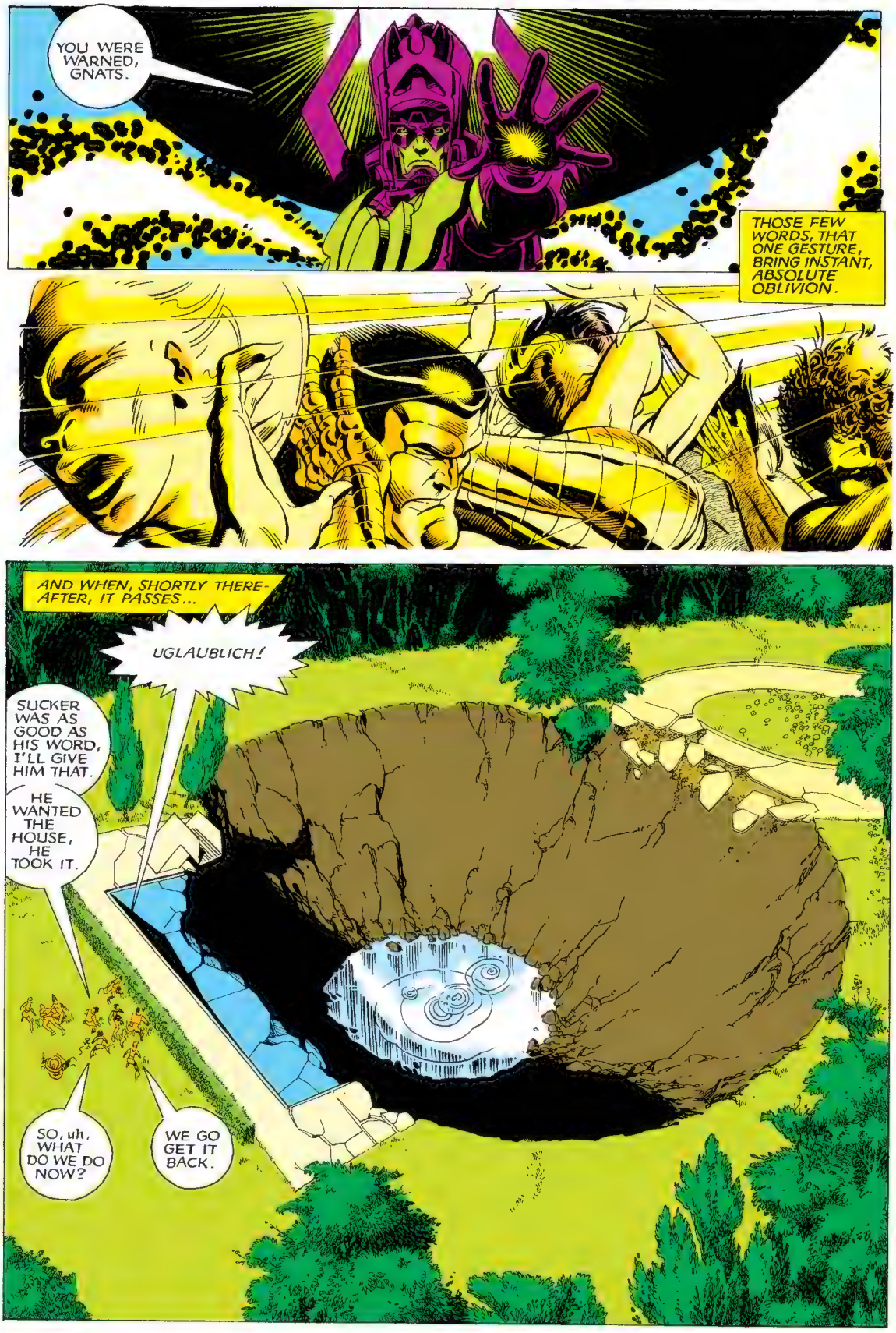

I SHALL MISS THIS WHEN I LEAVE, CHARLES.
THERE'S A SIMPLE SOLUTION.
YES -- YOU AND THE X-MEN COME WITH ME TO SHI'AR.
TOUCHÉ. I MUST SAY, WOLVERINE CHOSE HIS TEAM BRILLIANTLY. NIGHTCRAWLER'S TELEPORTING ABILITY ENABLES HIM TO BE ANYWHERE ON THE FIELD IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, WHILE ROGUE CAN FLY AFTER ANY BALL HE MISSES.
KRAK
AND WOLVERINE IS THE SNEAKIEST PITCHER I'VE EVER SEEN.
GOOD SHOT, PETER!
I THINK I'LL LET THAT ONE GO, MEIN FREUND.
YAH!
ME, TOO, WOLVIE.
CONGRATS, PETEY. YOU JUST PUT ANOTHER BALL INTO ORBIT.
NO, HE DIDN'T-- NOT THIS TIME! LOOK! IT'S COMIN' BACK DOWN!
IMPOSSIBLE. THE DESCENT TRAJECTORY'S ALL WRONG...
... UNLESS IT BOUNCED OFF SOMETHING ON THE WAY UP...
THAT'S NO BALL.
SHARRA AND K'YTHRI PRESERVE US--

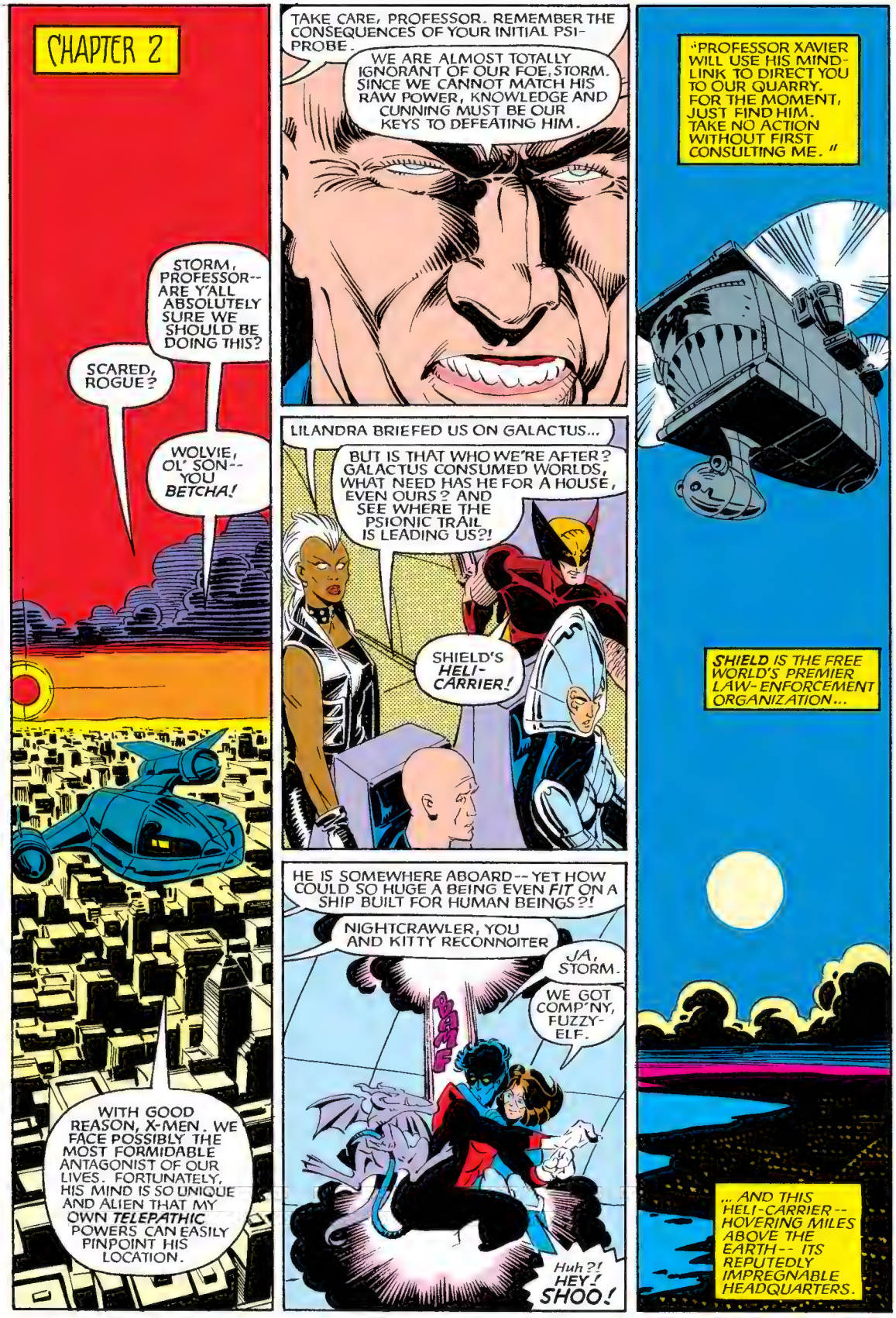
--IT'S A SHIP!!
MASSIVE 'PRESSOR BEAMS HAMMER THE ASTOUNDED MUTANTS TO THE GROUND-- AND NEARLY UNCONSCIOUS-- AS THE UNKNOWN VESSEL REVERSES ITS MAIN DRIVE...
... AND COMES TO A COMPLETE STOP DIRECTLY ABOVE THE MANSION.
A MOMENT LATER...


... ITS SOLE OCCUPANT EMERGES.
GREETINGS, EARTHLINGS, I COME IN PEACE.


GALACTUS!!
HE IS THE ENEMY OF ALL THAT LIVES, A BEING WHO CONSUMES LIVING PLANETS FOR FOOD--AND CRUSHES UTTERLY ANY WHO DARE TRY TO STOP HIM!
EVEN YOUR POWERS, X-MEN, ARE AS NOTHING COMPARED TO HIS!
YET HE SAID HE CAME IN PEACE, LILANDRA. PERHAPS A MIND-PROBE WILL YIELD SOME IDEA OF HIS TRUE INTENTIONS.
ODD--GALACTUS REGISTERS AS A PSYCHIC NULL...
... ALMOST AS IF HE DOESN'T EXIST. BUT WAIT-- I SENSE ANOTHER PRESENCE! I'LL ATTEMPT CONTACT...
CHARLES!
HERR PROFESSOR!
HE'S IN DEEP SHOCK! IN HIS CONDITION, I'D BEST NOT RISK 'PORTING HIM TO THE INFIRMARY--LILANDRA, GIVE ME A HAND!
AT LEAST CHARLEY GOT THE ANSWERS WE NEEDED.
AND WE SHALL PROCEED ACCORDINGLY, MY FRIEND.

WOW, THIS IS NEAT! SHE CREATED A STORM OUT OF NOWHERE-- I'VE NEVER SEEN ANY HUMAN DO THAT BEFORE!
HAVE A CARE, MORTALS. THE HARM THAT BEFELL YOUR PROFESSOR WAS UNINTENTIONAL-- AND HE WILL QUICKLY RECOVER-- BUT GALACTUS WILL PERMIT NO ONE TO ASSAULT HIS PERSON...
... OR STAY HIM FROM HIS COURSE.
I REQUIRE THE USE OF YOUR DOMICILE...
FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY, I SUGGEST YOU REMOVE YOURSELVES FROM THE PREMISES, AND NOT ATTEMPT TO DETER ME.
THIS IS OUR HOME, GALACTUS!
WE SHALL NOT GIVE IT UP WITHOUT A FIGHT!
THAT'S TELLIN' THE CREEP, STORM!
ORORO, NO! YOU HAVEN'T A PRAYER!
MAYBE SO, MAJESTY-- MAYBE NOT. WE WON'T KNOW 'TIL WE GIVE IT OUR BEST SHOT.

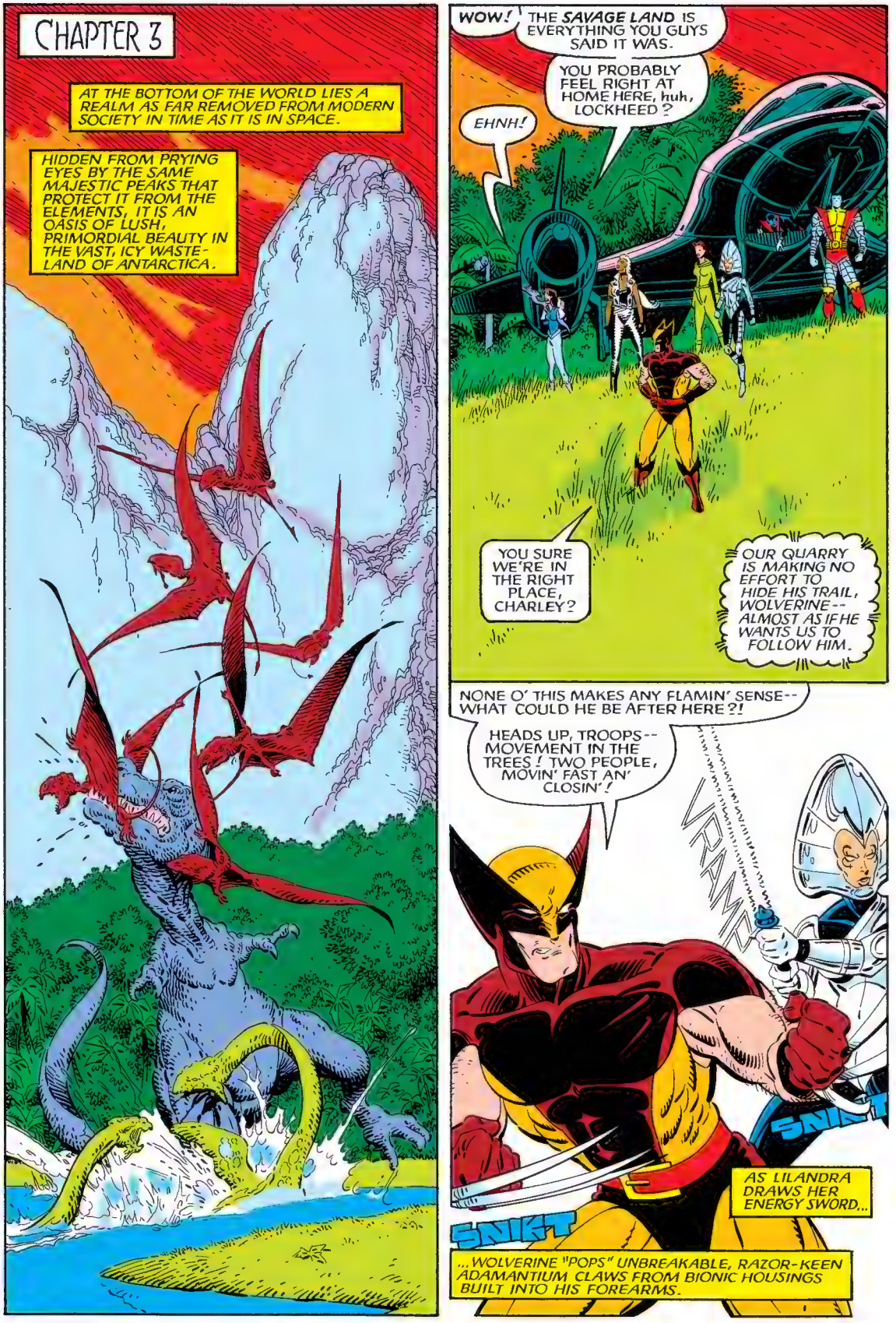

YOU WERE WARNED, GNATS.
THOSE FEW WORDS, THAT ONE GESTURE, BRING INSTANT, ABSOLUTE OBLIVION.
AND WHEN, SHORTLY THEREAFTER, IT PASSES...
UGLAUBLICH!
SUCKER WAS AS GOOD AS HIS WORD, I'LL GIVE HIM THAT.
HE WANTED THE HOUSE, HE TOOK IT.
SO, uh, WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
WE GO GET IT BACK.


CHAPTER 2
STORM, PROFESSOR-- ARE Y'ALL ABSOLUTELY SURE WE SHOULD BE DOING THIS?
SCARED, ROGUE?
WOLVIE, OL' SON-- YOU BETCHA!
WITH GOOD REASON, X-MEN. WE FACE POSSIBLY THE MOST FORMIDABLE ANTAGONIST OF OUR LIVES. FORTUNATELY, HIS MIND IS SO UNIQUE AND ALIEN THAT MY OWN TELEPATHIC POWERS CAN EASILY PINPOINT HIS LOCATION.
TAKE CARE, PROFESSOR. REMEMBER THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR INITIAL PSI-PROBE.
WE ARE ALMOST TOTALLY IGNORANT OF OUR FOE, STORM. SINCE WE CANNOT MATCH HIS RAW POWER, KNOWLEDGE AND CUNNING MUST BE OUR KEYS TO DEFEATING HIM.
LILANDRA BRIEFED US ON GALACTUS...
BUT IS THAT WHO WE'RE AFTER? GALACTUS CONSUMED WORLDS, WHAT NEED HAS HE FOR A HOUSE, EVEN OURS? AND SEE WHERE THE PSIONIC TRAIL IS LEADING US?!
SHIELD'S HELI-CARRIER!
HE IS SOMEWHERE ABOARD -- YET HOW COULD SO HUGE A BEING EVEN FIT ON A SHIP BUILT FOR HUMAN BEINGS?!
NIGHTCRAWLER, YOU AND KITTY RECONNOITER
JA, STORM.
WE GOT COMP'NY, FUZZY-ELF.
BAMF
Huh?! HEY! SHOO!
"PROFESSOR XAVIER WILL USE HIS MIND-LINK TO DIRECT YOU TO OUR QUARRY. FOR THE MOMENT, JUST FIND HIM. TAKE NO ACTION WITHOUT FIRST CONSULTING ME."
SHIELD IS THE FREE WORLD'S PREMIER LAW-ENFORCEMENT ORGANIZATION...
... AND THIS HELI-CARRIER -- HOVERING MILES ABOVE THE EARTH -- ITS REPUTEDLY IMPREGNABLE HEADQUARTERS.

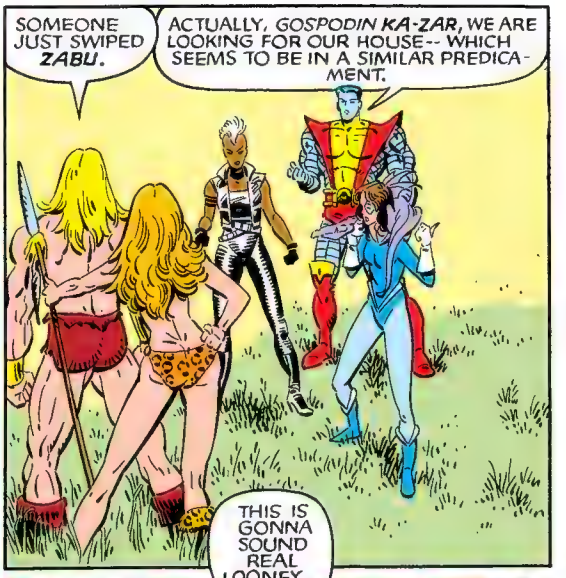
SHIELD'S DIRECTOR, VIRTUALLY FROM ITS INCEPTION, IS COLONEL NICHOLAS FURY.
THE LADY SHARING HIS QUARTERS--AND HIS LIFE--IS LA CONTESSA VALENTINA ALLEGRO de FONTAINE.
AS I RECALL, CONTESSA YOU WERE HOLDING A ROSE...
NICHOLAS, CARA MIA...
...IT'S THE THOUGHTS THAT COUNT, NOT THE PROPS...
9

HOLD IT, BUSTER!
WHATEVER YOU'RE DOING IN HERE--CUT IT OUT!
WHO THE BLAZES--?!!
GOTCHA--
--YYYIII!
POP
NO! I WON'T LET YOU STOP ME! TOO MUCH IS AT STAKE!
NICHOLAS--LOOK OUT--SOMETHING'S BLASTING THROUGH THE WINDOW!
LOCKHEED, YOU DUMMY, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
THE CROOK'S GETTING AWAY!
GERONIMOOO
POP
A WOODEN INDIAN--HOW'D HE DO THAT?!
OMIGOSH, THIS IS SOMEONE'S APARTMENT! THAT MAN, THAT WOMAN --WHAT HAVE I DONE!?!
BEFORE I LOSE MY TEMPER, YOUNG LADY, I WANT AN EXPLANATION.
MAKE IT REAL FAST AND REAL GOOD!
Uh...uh...oh, GEEZ, I'M REAL SORRY I DIDN'T MEAN I NEVER REALIZED--NIGHTCRAWLER, HELP!!!!!!

KATZCHEN, WHAT'S GOING ON-- THEY'VE SOUNDED THE INTRUDER ALARM!
NICK, YOU OKAY?!
DAMAGE CONTROL, SEAL THE BREACH INNA HULL AND-- HOLY MOTHER M'CREE! WHERE'D HE COME FROM?!
THIS IS NOT GOING AT ALL WELL.
STORM WILL NOT BE PLEASED.
FORGIVE THE INTRUSION, MEIN HERR. I'D EXPLAIN IF I COULD...
... BUT I FEAR YOU'D NEVER BELIEVE ME. AUF WIEDERSEHEN!
GREAT TIMING, KIDDO.
Oh, SHUT UP.
I'M SO EMBARRASSED, I COULD DIE!
TA!
BAM!
IF YA DON'T MIND ME ASKIN', NICK...
SHOULD WE GO TO FULL ALERT, SIR? WAS THIS AN ATTACK?!
A PANTY RAID'S MORE LIKE IT, SOLDIER. THOSE KID SUPER-TYPES ARE GETTIN' OUT OF HAND.
NICHOLAS, YOUR EYE-PATCH-- IT'S GONE!


CHAPTER 3
AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WORLD LIES A REALM AS FAR REMOVED FROM MODERN SOCIETY IN TIME AS IT IS IN SPACE.
HIDDEN FROM PRYING EYES BY THE SAME MAJESTIC PEAKS THAT PROTECT IT FROM THE ELEMENTS, IT IS AN OASIS OF LUSH, PRIMORDIAL BEAUTY IN THE VAST, ICY WASTE-LAND OF ANTARCTICA.
WOW! THE SAVAGE LAND IS EVERYTHING YOU GUYS SAID IT WAS.
YOU PROBABLY FEEL RIGHT AT HOME HERE, huh, LOCKHEED?
EHNH!
YOU SURE WE'RE IN THE RIGHT PLACE, CHARLEY?
OUR QUARRY IS MAKING NO EFFORT TO HIDE HIS TRAIL, WOLVERINE--ALMOST AS IF HE WANTS US TO FOLLOW HIM.
NONE O' THIS MAKES ANY FLAMIN' SENSE--WHAT COULD HE BE AFTER HERE?!
HEADS UP, TROOPS--MOVEMENT IN THE TREES! TWO PEOPLE, MOVIN' FAST AN' CLOSIN'!
KRAMM
SNIKT
AS LILANDRA DRAWS HER ENERGY SWORD,..
SNIKT
...WOLVERINE "POPS" UNBREAKABLE, RAZOR-KEEN ADAMANTIUM CLAWS FROM BIONIC HOUSINGS BUILT INTO HIS FOREARMS.

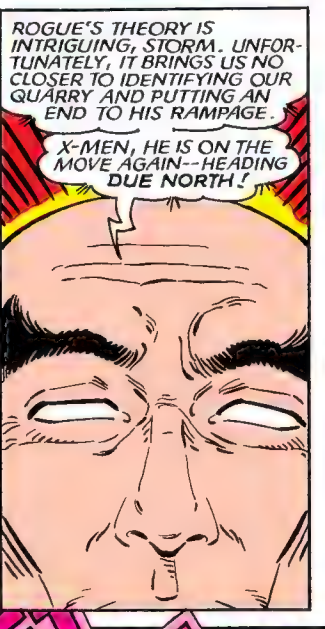
FRIENDS OF YOURS, KEVIN DARLING?
A SIGHT FOR SORE EYES, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. SHANNA O'HARA, ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE THE UNCANNY X-MEN.
YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED A SLIGHTLY KIDNAPPED SABRE-TOOTH TIGER, BY ANY CHANCE?

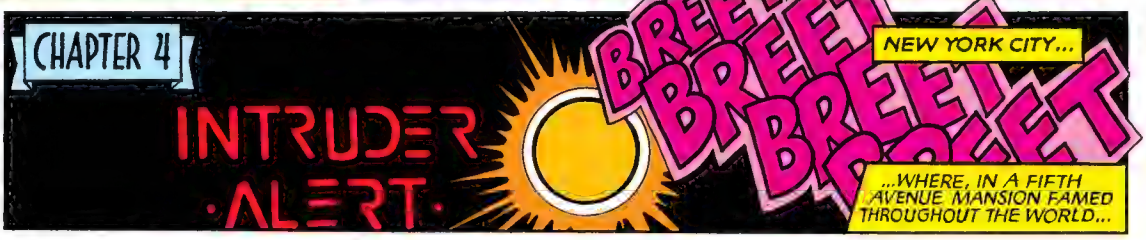

SOMEONE JUST SWIPED ZABU.
ACTUALLY, GOSPODIN KA-ZAR, WE ARE LOOKING FOR OUR HOUSE-- WHICH SEEMS TO BE IN A SIMILAR PREDICAMENT.

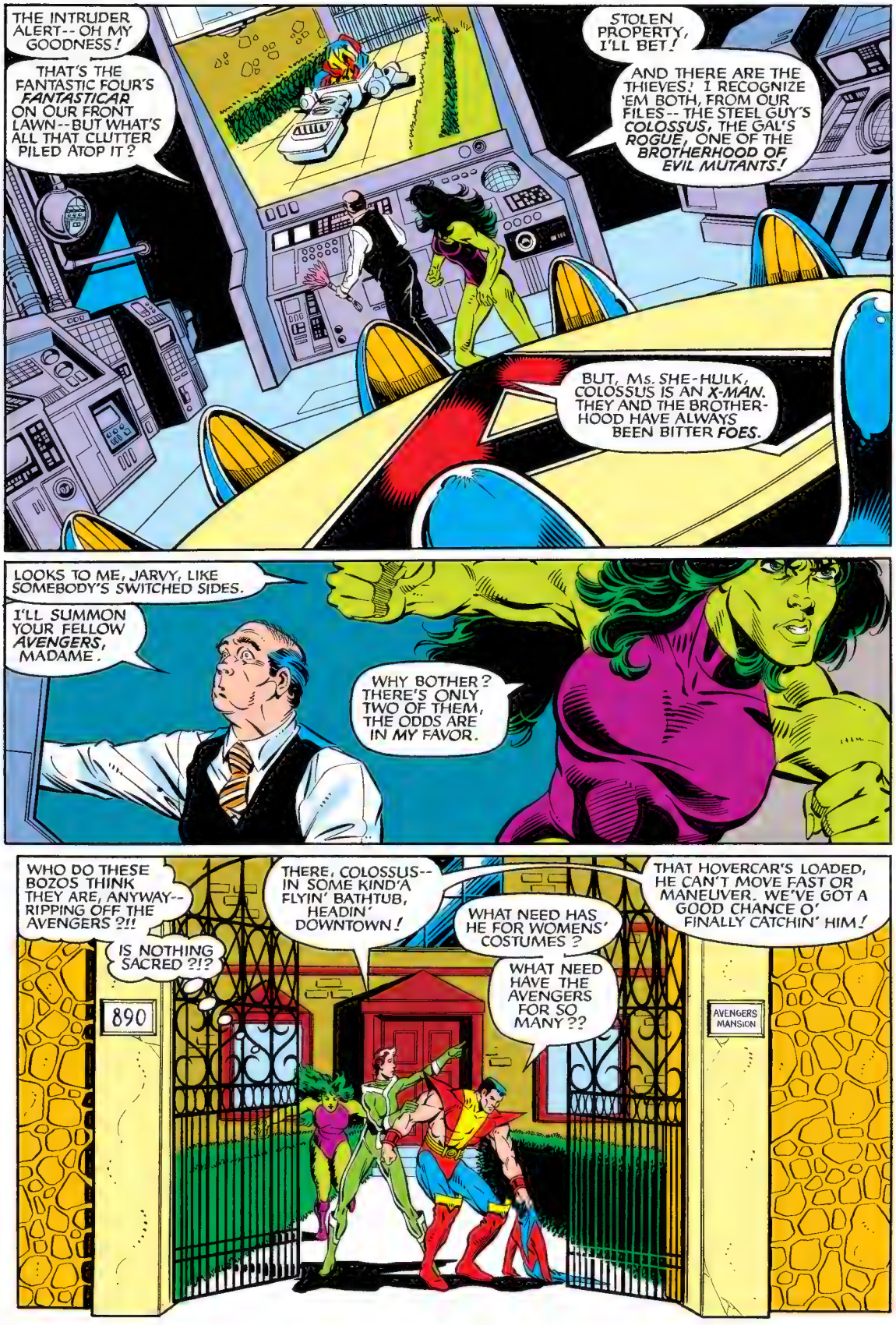
THIS IS GONNA SOUND REAL LOONEY...
...BUT WHILE AH GOT NO IDEA WHO'S DOIN' THIS...
...AH THINK AH MAY HAVE FIGURED OUT WHY.

THE CREEP STEALS OUR MANSION, COLONEL FURY'S EYE-PATCH, AN' NOW, LORD KA-ZAR'S PET.
AH BETCHA IT'S A SCAVENGER HUNT.

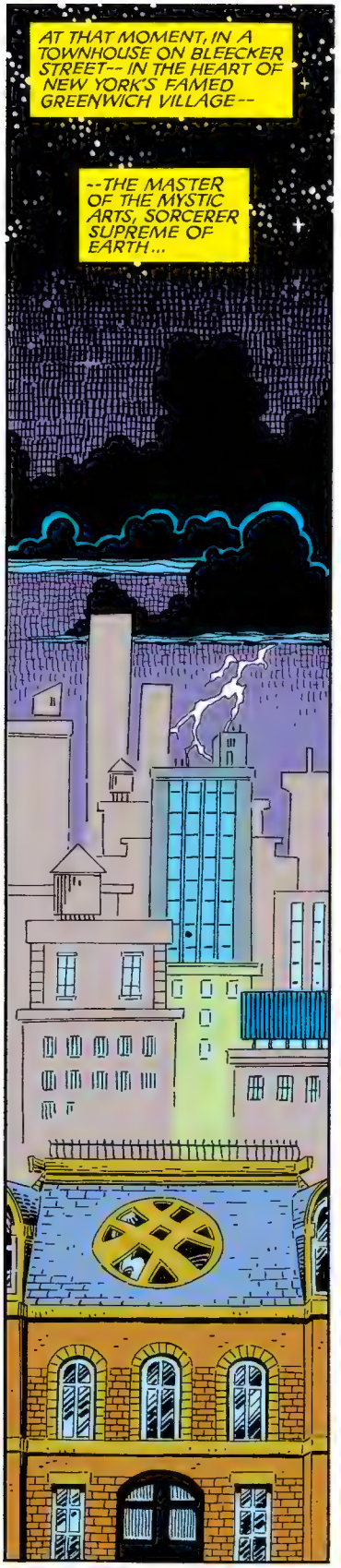
THAT'S THE SILLIEST THING I EVER HEARD.
YOU GOT A BETTER IDEA, LORD KA-ZAR? ANY OF YOU?!
PROFESSOR-- ANY COMMENTS?

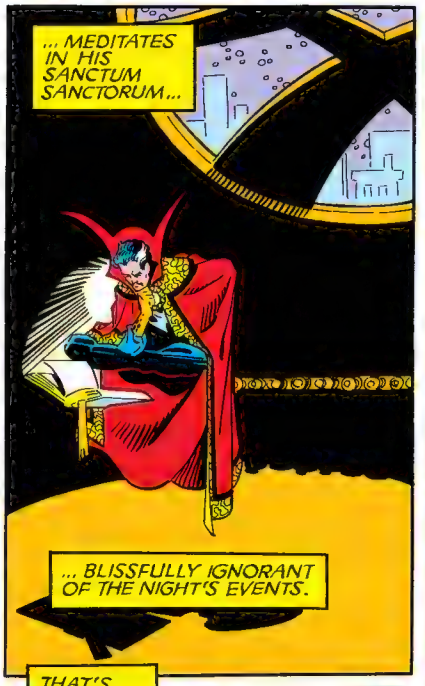

ROGUE'S THEORY IS INTRIGUING, STORM. UNFORTUNATELY, IT BRINGS US NO CLOSER TO IDENTIFYING OUR QUARRY AND PUTTING AN END TO HIS RAMPAGE.
X-MEN, HE IS ON THE MOVE AGAIN--HEADING DUE NORTH!

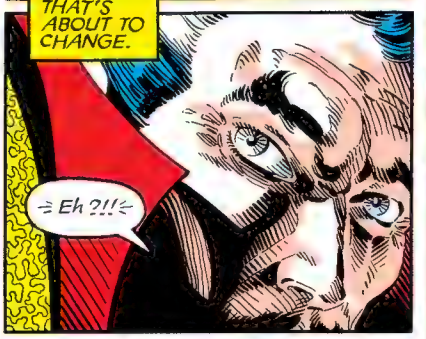

CHAPTER 4
INTRUDER ALERT
BREEP BREEP BREEP
NEW YORK CITY...
...WHERE, IN A FIFTH AVENUE MANSION FAMED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD...


THE INTRUDER ALERT-- OH MY GOODNESS!
THAT'S THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S FANTASTICAR ON OUR FRONT LAWN--BUT WHAT'S ALL THAT CLUTTER PILED ATOP IT?
STOLEN PROPERTY, I'LL BET!
AND THERE ARE THE THIEVES! I RECOGNIZE 'EM BOTH, FROM OUR FILES-- THE STEEL GUY'S COLOSSUS, THE GAL'S ROGUE, ONE OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS!
BUT, Ms. SHE-HULK, COLOSSUS IS AN X-MAN. THEY AND THE BROTHERHOOD HAVE ALWAYS BEEN BITTER FOES.
LOOKS TO ME, JARVY, LIKE SOMEBODY'S SWITCHED SIDES.
I'LL SUMMON YOUR FELLOW AVENGERS, MADAME.
WHY BOTHER? THERE'S ONLY TWO OF THEM, THE ODDS ARE IN MY FAVOR.
WHO DO THESE BOZOS THINK THEY ARE, ANYWAY-- RIPPING OFF THE AVENGERS?!!
IS NOTHING SACRED?!?
THERE, COLOSSUS-- IN SOME KIND'A FLYIN' BATHTUB, HEADIN' DOWNTOWN!
WHAT NEED HAS HE FOR WOMENS' COSTUMES?
WHAT NEED HAVE THE AVENGERS FOR SO MANY??
THAT HOVERCAR'S LOADED, HE CAN'T MOVE FAST OR MANEUVER. WE'VE GOT A GOOD CHANCE O' FINALLY CATCHIN' HIM!
890
AVENGERS MANSION

C'MON--
--HEY!
NICE TAKE-OFF, SWEET-HEART.
AND AN EVEN NICER LANDING.
WHAM!
ONE CROOK DOWN, ONE TO GO.
YOU ARE MISTAKEN, MISS. WE ARE NOT CRIMINALS.
WE SEEK TO CATCH ONE.
GIMME A BREAK, SHORTY. I DIDN'T BELIEVE THAT LINE...
...WHEN I WAS A LAWYER--
WHOULLP!
A PITY, FOR IT IS THE TRUTH.
EXCUSE ME, FELLA, BUT DIDN'T YOUR MOTHER TEACH YOU TO BE POLITE TO LADIES--
--EVEN MEAN, GREEN ONES.
IRON MAN MAY NOT BE AN ACTIVE AVENGER ANY-MORE, BUT I'M NOT GOING TO FLY ON BY AND LET ONE OF THEM BE TRASHED.


AT THAT MOMENT, IN A TOWNHOUSE ON BLEECKER STREET-- IN THE HEART OF NEW YORK'S FAMED GREENWICH VILLAGE--
--THE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS, SORCERER SUPREME OF EARTH...

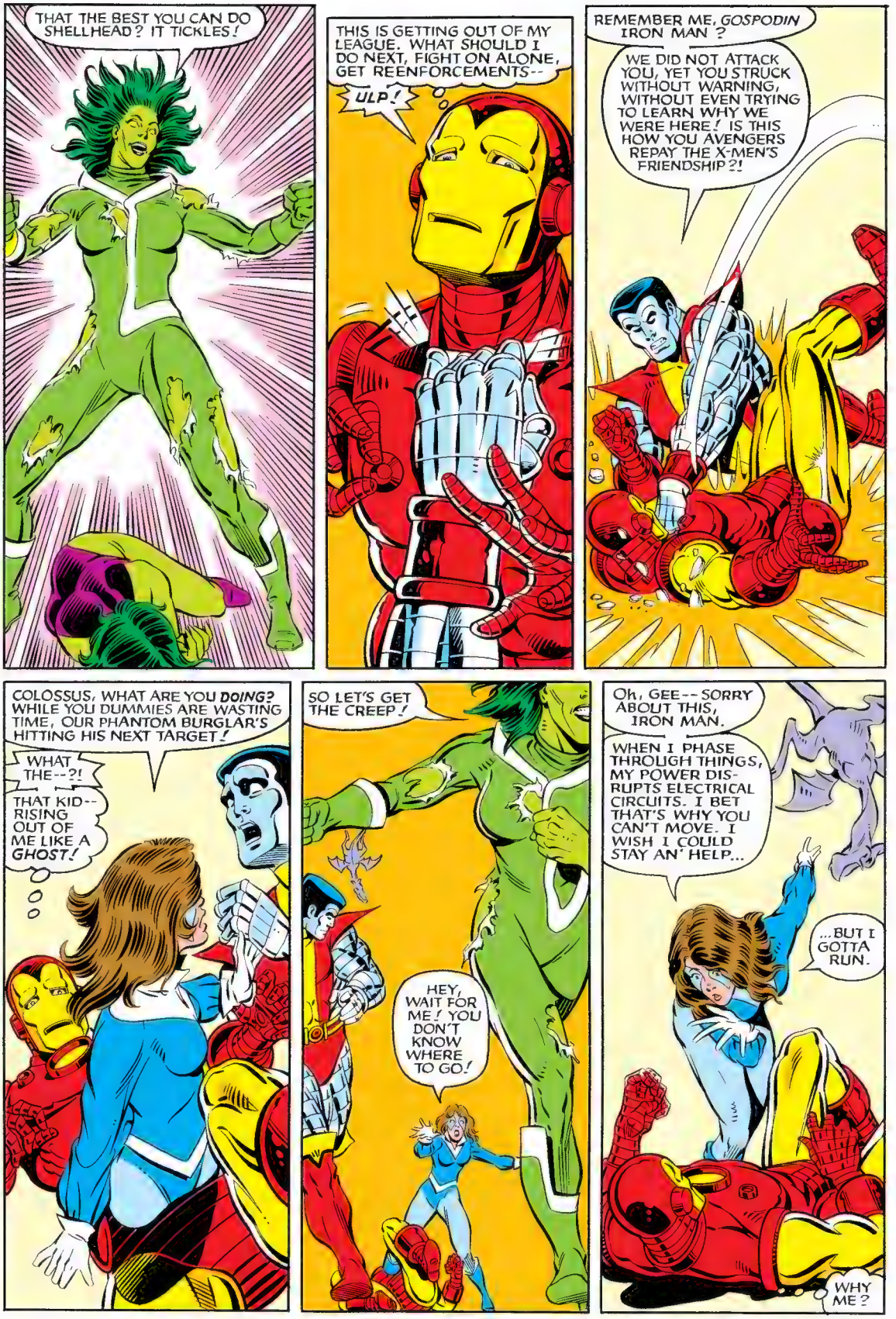

... MEDITATES IN HIS SANCTUM SANCTORUM...
... BLISSFULLY IGNORANT OF THE NIGHT'S EVENTS.

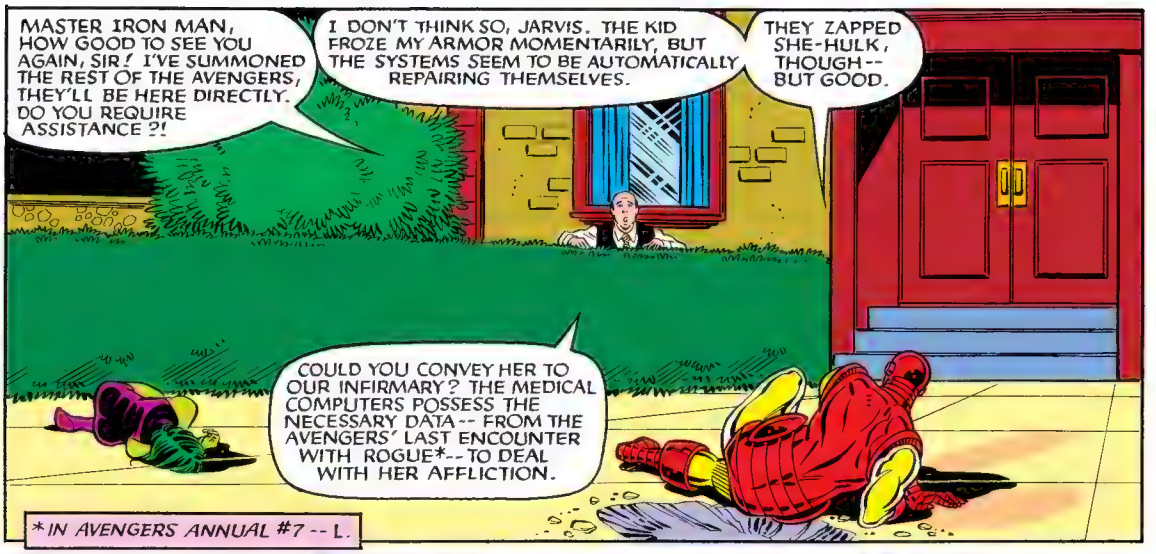

THAT'S ABOUT TO CHANGE.
=Eh ?!!=

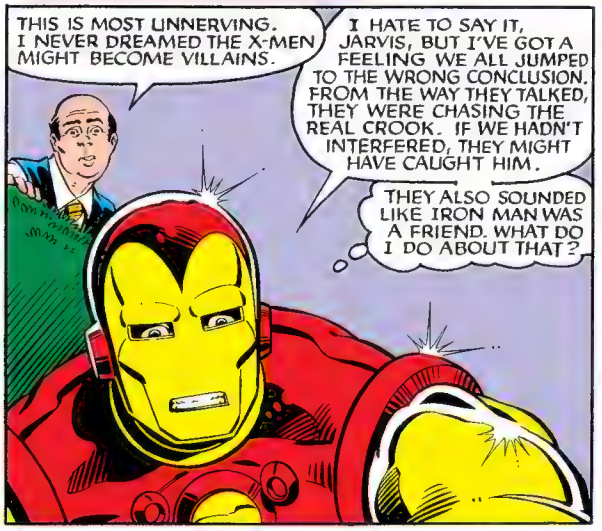
BY THE HOARY HOSTS OF HOGGOTH!

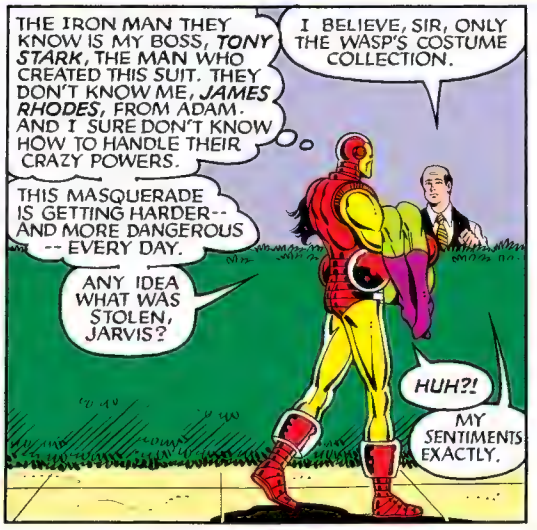
THE BROWNSTONE IS PROTECTED BY SPELLS AGAINST ASSAULTS MYSTIC AND TEMPORAL, MAKING THE BUILDING SUPPOSEDLY IMPREGNABLE. YET Dr. STRANGE'S SIGIL WINDOW IS SNATCHED FROM ITS FRAME WITH APPALLING, IMPOSSIBLE EASE.
WITH THE WINDOW GONE, THOSE SELF-SAME SHIELD SPELLS ARE TOTALLY DISRUPTED.

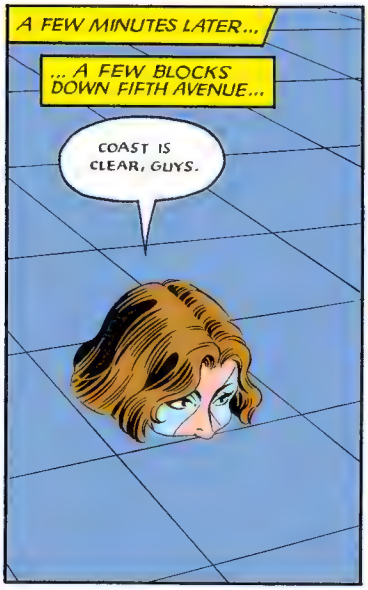
NEARBY...
WHAT THE HECK IS THAT?!
BEATS ME, SHE-HULK. AND I THINK I'D RATHER NOT FIND OUT.
NO FALSE MOVES, PAL, OR YOU'LL GET ANOTHER DOSE OF MY REPULSOR RAYS-- UNDERSTAND?
IF... YOU WILL... ALLOW ME... TO... EXPLAIN...
A WASTED EFFORT, COLOSSUS. THESE JERKS'LL NEVER LISTEN.
ROGUE-- YOU'RE CONSCIOUS!
SURPRISE! NOT ONLY CAN AH TAKE A PUNCH...
... BUT AH GIVE AS GOOD AS AH GET, AN' THEN SOME!
THE SLIGHTEST TOUCH-- MY FLESH T' YOURS-- RENDERS YOU UNCONSCIOUS...
UHHHNNNN
... AN' TRANSFERS YOUR POWERS TO ME!
WITH SHE-HULK'S STRENGTH ADDED TO HER OWN, ROGUE'LL BECOME PRETTY NEAR UNBEATABLE.
THE TRANS-FORMATION ISN'T COMPLETE, THOUGH-- MAYBE A REPULSOR BLAST CAN STILL KAYO HER.

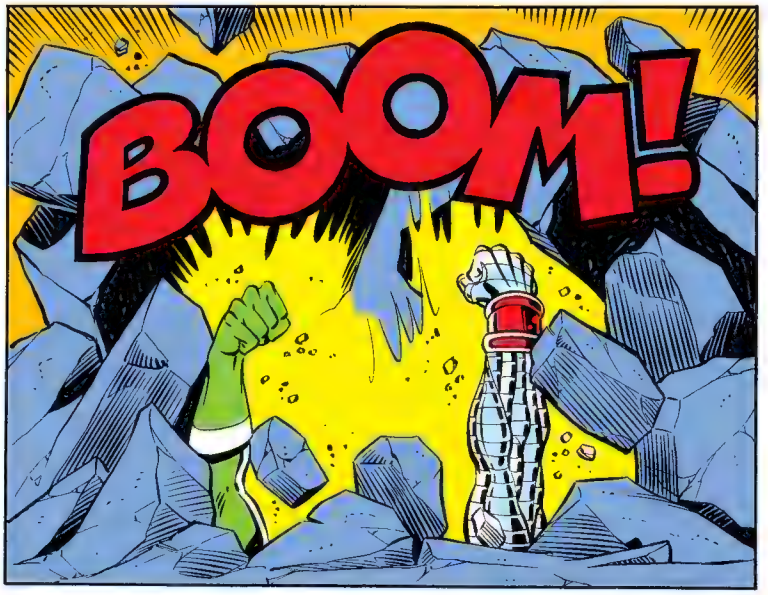

THAT THE BEST YOU CAN DO SHELLHEAD? IT TICKLES!
THIS IS GETTING OUT OF MY LEAGUE. WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT, FIGHT ON ALONE, GET REENFORCEMENTS--
ULP!
REMEMBER ME, GOSPODIN IRON MAN?
WE DID NOT ATTACK YOU, YET YOU STRUCK WITHOUT WARNING, WITHOUT EVEN TRYING TO LEARN WHY WE WERE HERE! IS THIS HOW YOU AVENGERS REPAY THE X-MEN'S FRIENDSHIP?!
COLOSSUS, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WHILE YOU DUMMIES ARE WASTING TIME, OUR PHANTOM BURGLAR'S HITTING HIS NEXT TARGET!
WHAT THE--?!
THAT KID-- RISING OUT OF ME LIKE A GHOST!
SO LET'S GET THE CREEP!
HEY, WAIT FOR ME! YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO!
Oh, GEE-- SORRY ABOUT THIS, IRON MAN.
WHEN I PHASE THROUGH THINGS, MY POWER DISRUPTS ELECTRICAL CIRCUITS. I BET THAT'S WHY YOU CAN'T MOVE. I WISH I COULD STAY AN' HELP...
...BUT I GOTTA RUN.
WHY ME?

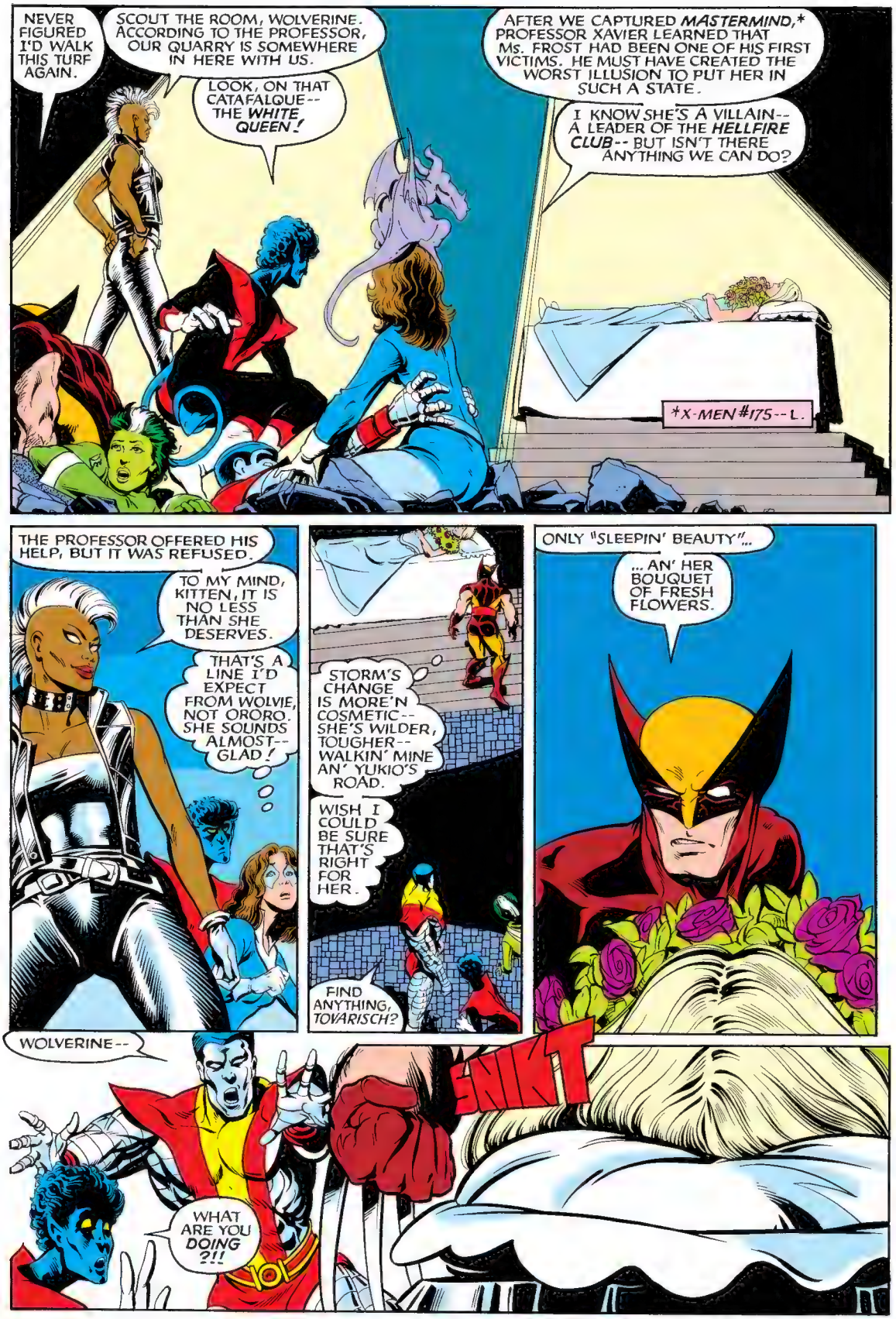

MASTER IRON MAN, HOW GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, SIR! I'VE SUMMONED THE REST OF THE AVENGERS, THEY'LL BE HERE DIRECTLY. DO YOU REQUIRE ASSISTANCE?!
I DON'T THINK SO, JARVIS. THE KID FROZE MY ARMOR MOMENTARILY, BUT THE SYSTEMS SEEM TO BE AUTOMATICALLY REPAIRING THEMSELVES.
THEY ZAPPED SHE-HULK, THOUGH -- BUT GOOD.
COULD YOU CONVEY HER TO OUR INFIRMARY? THE MEDICAL COMPUTERS POSSESS THE NECESSARY DATA -- FROM THE AVENGERS' LAST ENCOUNTER WITH ROGUE* -- TO DEAL WITH HER AFFLICTION.
*IN AVENGERS ANNUAL #7 -- L.


THIS IS MOST UNNERVING. I NEVER DREAMED THE X-MEN MIGHT BECOME VILLAINS.
I HATE TO SAY IT, JARVIS, BUT I'VE GOT A FEELING WE ALL JUMPED TO THE WRONG CONCLUSION. FROM THE WAY THEY TALKED, THEY WERE CHASING THE REAL CROOK. IF WE HADN'T INTERFERED, THEY MIGHT HAVE CAUGHT HIM.
THEY ALSO SOUNDED LIKE IRON MAN WAS A FRIEND. WHAT DO I DO ABOUT THAT?


THE IRON MAN THEY KNOW IS MY BOSS, TONY STARK, THE MAN WHO CREATED THIS SUIT. THEY DON'T KNOW ME, JAMES RHODES, FROM ADAM. AND I SURE DON'T KNOW HOW TO HANDLE THEIR CRAZY POWERS.
I BELIEVE, SIR, ONLY THE WASP'S COSTUME COLLECTION.
THIS MASQUERADE IS GETTING HARDER -- AND MORE DANGEROUS -- EVERY DAY.
ANY IDEA WHAT WAS STOLEN, JARVIS?
HUH?!
MY SENTIMENTS EXACTLY.


A FEW MINUTES LATER...
... A FEW BLOCKS DOWN FIFTH AVENUE...
COAST IS CLEAR, GUYS.

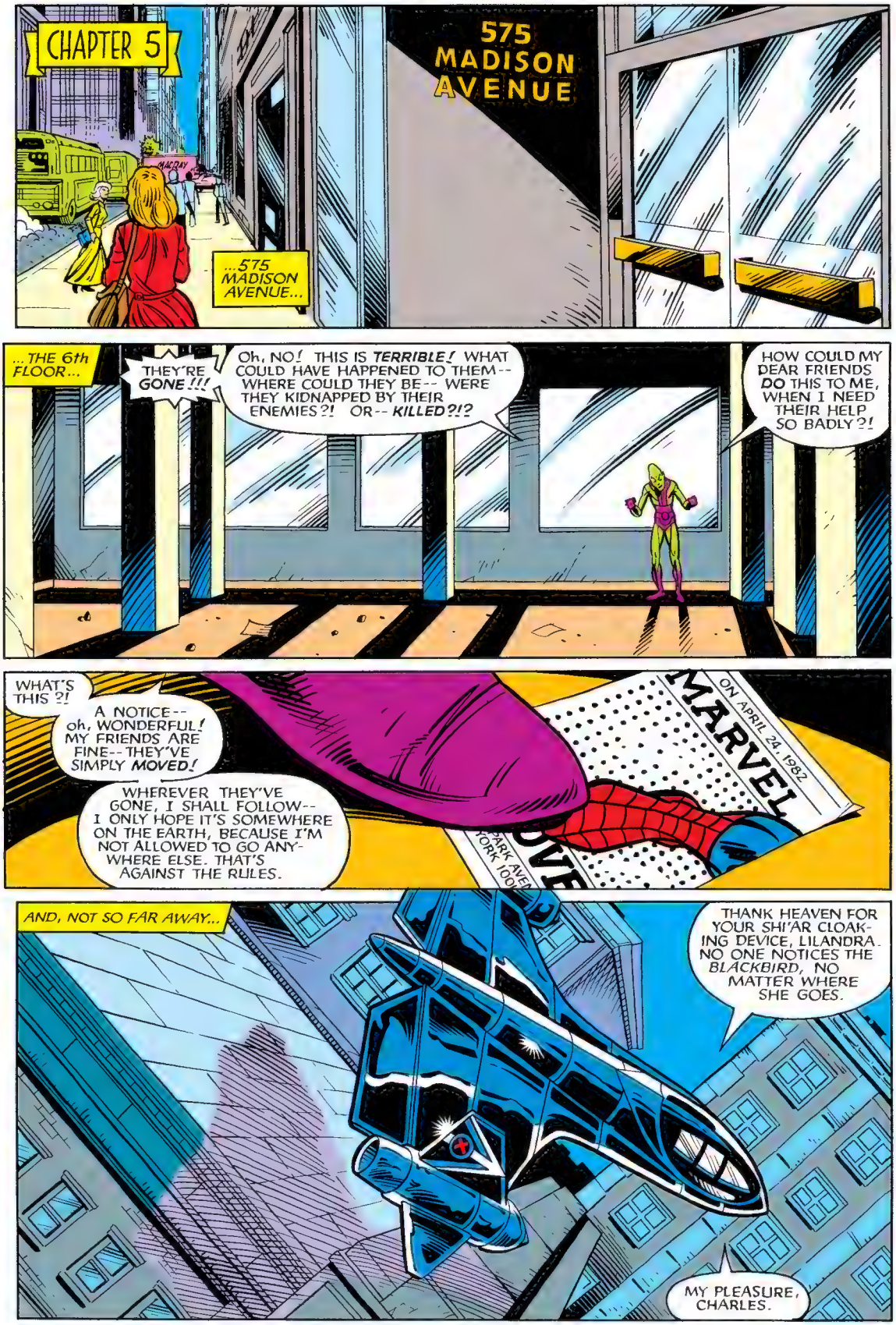

BOOM!

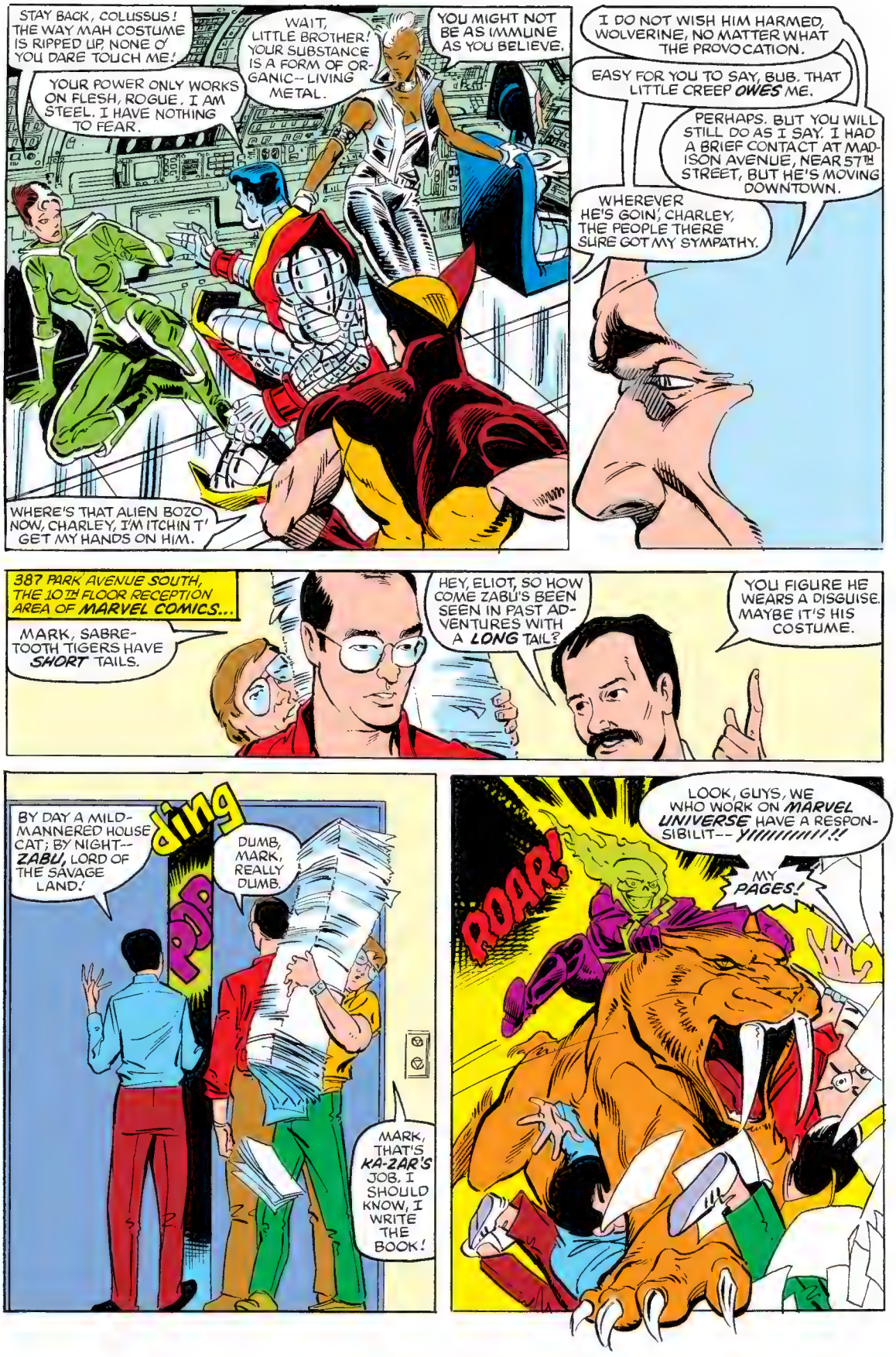

NEVER FIGURED I'D WALK THIS TURF AGAIN.
SCOUT THE ROOM, WOLVERINE. ACCORDING TO THE PROFESSOR, OUR QUARRY IS SOMEWHERE IN HERE WITH US.
LOOK, ON THAT CATAFALQUE-- THE WHITE QUEEN!
AFTER WE CAPTURED MASTERMIND,* PROFESSOR XAVIER LEARNED THAT MS. FROST HAD BEEN ONE OF HIS FIRST VICTIMS. HE MUST HAVE CREATED THE WORST ILLUSION TO PUT HER IN SUCH A STATE.
I KNOW SHE'S A VILLAIN-- A LEADER OF THE HELLFIRE CLUB-- BUT ISN'T THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO?
*X-MEN #175 -- L.
THE PROFESSOR OFFERED HIS HELP, BUT IT WAS REFUSED.
TO MY MIND, KITTEN, IT IS NO LESS THAN SHE DESERVES.
THAT'S A LINE I'D EXPECT FROM WOLVIE, NOT ORORO. SHE SOUNDS ALMOST-- GLAD!
STORM'S CHANGE IS MORE'N COSMETIC-- SHE'S WILDER, TOUGHER-- WALKIN' MINE AN' YUKIO'S ROAD.
WISH I COULD BE SURE THAT'S RIGHT FOR HER.
FIND ANYTHING, TOVARISCH?
ONLY "SLEEPIN' BEAUTY"...
... AN' HER BOUQUET OF FRESH FLOWERS.
WOLVERINE--
SNIKT
WHAT ARE YOU DOING ?!!

IT'S THE FLOWERS-- THEY AIN'T REAL--
GLUGLMPGH!!
POP
SBLUOOSH
GOTCHA!
THIS IS PRIVATE PROPERTY, X-MEN!
YOUR TRESPASS WILL COST YOU DEAR!
POP
Oh, MY! THE GENTLE-MAN LOOKS UPSET!
=?!?=
LEAVE HIM TO ME, Y'ALL!
ROGUE, WAIT!
SEBASTIAN SHAW!
IMPETUOUS AS EVER, eh, ROGUE?
DID YOU LEARN NOTHING FROM OUR LAST ENCOUNTER-- THAT, THANKS TO MY OWN MUTANT POWERS, THE HARDER I'M HIT...
...THE STRONGER I BECOME!

THERE ARE WAYS TO DEFEAT YOU, MEIN HERR, WITHOUT STRIKING A BLOW.
THAT ONE PUNCH DRAINED ALL THE POWER ROGUE ABSORBED FROM SHE-HULK!
BAMF
BAMF
BAMA
SHE'S BARELY CONSCIOUS! SHAW COULD TEAR HER APART--UNLESS I DIVERT HIS ATTENTION TO ME!
UNNOTICED IN THE CONFUSION, A BRIGHTLY-COLORED BALLOON (WHICH, A MINUTE AGO, HAD BEEN A GUN) FLOATS TOWARDS A COSTUME ONCE WORN BY THE HELLFIRE CLUB'S BLACK QUEEN.
YOU ALL LOOK LIKE YOU'RE HAVING SO MUCH FUN, I WISH I COULD STAY AND JOIN IN.
BUT I'M LATE--AND I'VE LOTS STILL LEFT TO DO!
POP
'BYE!
WAS--WHOULFF!
I WONDER HOW THE OTHERS ARE DOING? I WISH I'D NEVER PROMISED NOT TO PEEK. I SHOULDN'T WORRY, I'M GETTING GREAT PRIZES...
... I'M SURE TO WIN!
STUPID MOVE-- I'M LUCKY SHAW DIDN'T SNAP ME IN TWO--BUT THAT VOICE DISTRACTED ME!
ARGH--OUCH!--WHERE'D THIS ROCKET COME FROM?!
WATCH OUT, EVERYONE! THE CEILING'S COMING DOWN!

FLOWERS, GUNS, BALLOONS-- NOW, A ROCKET-- WE ARE OBVIOUSLY UP AGAINST A SHAPE-CHANGER, AND, I THINK, ONE WHO MEANS US NO REAL HARM...
...ALTHOUGH HIS ANTICS MAY YET GET US ALL KILLED.
IT IS ALMOST AS IF WE ARE PLAYING A CHILD'S GAME.
OUR MISSION HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH SEBASTIAN SHAW OR THE HELLFIRE CLUB. WE TRIED TO CATCH A THIEF, AND FAILED. FOR THE LAST TIME!
THE MADNESS HAS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH, AND I MEAN TO SEE IT ENDED!
YOW!
STORM, WHAT'RE YOU DOING?!
A WHIRL-WIND!
HOLD TIGHT, LOCKHEED!
OLD SCORES HERE MUST WAIT TO BE SETTLED ANOTHER DAY.
THAT DAY WILL COME, WIND-RIDER-- AND SOONER THAN YOU THINK--
--YOU CAN COUNT ON IT.

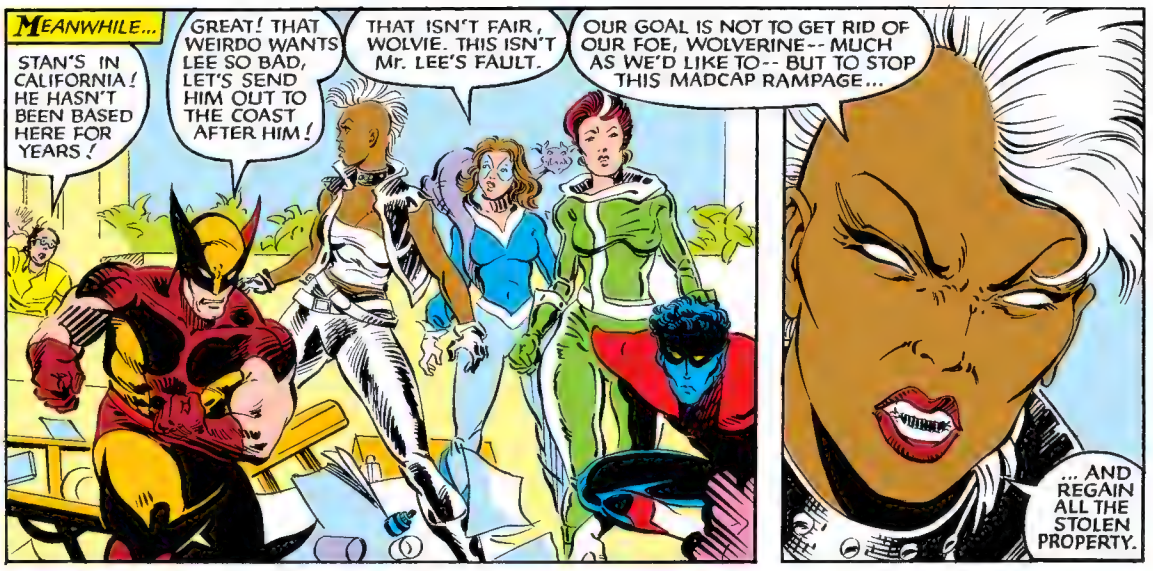

CHAPTER 5
575 MADISON AVENUE
...575 MADISON AVENUE...
...THE 6th FLOOR...
THEY'RE GONE!!!
Oh, NO! THIS IS TERRIBLE! WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO THEM-- WHERE COULD THEY BE-- WERE THEY KIDNAPPED BY THEIR ENEMIES?! OR-- KILLED?!?
HOW COULD MY DEAR FRIENDS DO THIS TO ME, WHEN I NEED THEIR HELP SO BADLY?!
WHAT'S THIS?!
A NOTICE-- oh, WONDERFUL! MY FRIENDS ARE FINE-- THEY'VE SIMPLY MOVED!
WHEREVER THEY'VE GONE, I SHALL FOLLOW-- I ONLY HOPE IT'S SOMEWHERE ON THE EARTH, BECAUSE I'M NOT ALLOWED TO GO ANY-WHERE ELSE. THAT'S AGAINST THE RULES.
ON APRIL 24, 1982
MARVEL
AND, NOT SO FAR AWAY...
THANK HEAVEN FOR YOUR SHI'AR CLOAK-ING DEVICE, LILANDRA. NO ONE NOTICES THE BLACKBIRD, NO MATTER WHERE SHE GOES.
MY PLEASURE, CHARLES.


STAY BACK, COLUSSUS! THE WAY MAH COSTUME IS RIPPED UP, NONE O' YOU DARE TOUCH ME!
YOUR POWER ONLY WORKS ON FLESH, ROGUE. I AM STEEL. I HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR.
WAIT, LITTLE BROTHER! YOUR SUBSTANCE IS A FORM OF ORGANIC-- LIVING METAL.
YOU MIGHT NOT BE AS IMMUNE AS YOU BELIEVE.
WHERE'S THAT ALIEN BOZO NOW, CHARLEY, I'M ITCHIN T' GET MY HANDS ON HIM.
I DO NOT WISH HIM HARMED, WOLVERINE, NO MATTER WHAT THE PROVOCATION.
EASY FOR YOU TO SAY, BUB. THAT LITTLE CREEP OWES ME.
PERHAPS. BUT YOU WILL STILL DO AS I SAY. I HAD A BRIEF CONTACT AT MADISON AVENUE, NEAR 57TH STREET, BUT HE'S MOVING DOWNTOWN.
WHEREVER HE'S GOIN', CHARLEY, THE PEOPLE THERE SURE GOT MY SYMPATHY.
387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, THE 10TH FLOOR RECEPTION AREA OF MARVEL COMICS...
MARK, SABRE-TOOTH TIGERS HAVE SHORT TAILS.
HEY, ELIOT, SO HOW COME ZABU'S BEEN SEEN IN PAST ADVENTURES WITH A LONG TAIL?
YOU FIGURE HE WEARS A DISGUISE. MAYBE IT'S HIS COSTUME.
BY DAY A MILD-MANNERED HOUSE CAT; BY NIGHT-- ZABU, LORD OF THE SAVAGE LAND!
ding
POP
DUMB, MARK, REALLY DUMB.
MARK, THAT'S KA-ZAR'S JOB. I SHOULD KNOW, I WRITE THE BOOK!
LOOK, GUYS, WE WHO WORK ON MARVEL UNIVERSE HAVE A RESPONSIBILIT-- Y!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
MY PAGES!
ROAR!

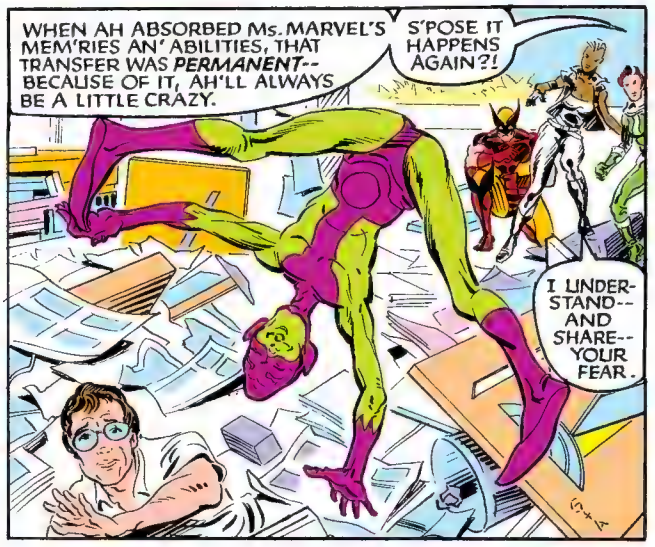
ding
EXCUSE ME, YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED PAST HERE WITHOUT A VISITOR'S PASS!
WAS THAT--?
SURE WAS.
SHORT TAIL, TOO, MARK.
BE CAREFUL, WOLVERINE! REMEMBER THE PROFESSOR'S INSTRUCTIONS!
Oh, GOLLY-- SORRY ABOUT THIS, FELLAS. WE'RE THE X-MEN-- WE'RE CHASING A CRIMINAL WE WON'T BE HERE LONG WE'LL TRY NOT TO MAKE A MESS WAIT-- FOR ME!
WHEN I GET MY HANDS ON CLAREMONT --!!!!!
LEAVING EDITOR MARK GRUENWALD, ASSISTANT EDITORS ELIOT BROWN AND MIKE CARLIN-- PLUS RECEPTIONIST DARLENE COLE IN THE FOYER--
BAWF
... OUR HEROES PROCEED TO THE FAR-FAMED--BUT NOT TERRIBLY SPACIOUS-- MARVEL BULLPEN.
THERE'S ZABU!
BUT WHERE'S OUR ALIEN?!
WHOAAOW!
CUT IT OUT, YOU PEOPLE! THIS IS AN OFFICE, NOT A PLAYGROUND!
TELL 'EM AGAIN, RICK! I DON'T THINK THEY'RE LISTENING!
GOT ANY BETTER IDEAS, RON?
YEAH--I'M GONNA HIDE BEHIND DANNY CRESP! 'TIL IT'S SAFE!

LINING ONE WALL OF THE BULLPEN ARE THE VARIOUS EDITORIAL OFFICES, AMONG THEM LARRY HAMA'S...
... WHEREIN HE IS CURRENTLY IN CONFERENCE WITH PRODIGAL FREE-LANCER MICHAEL GOLDEN...
SO YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT MOVING TO THE BIG CITY, huh?
MAYBE. CITIES MAKE ME CLAUSTROPHOBIC, LAR, BUT THE CLIMATE IN FLORIDA'S GETTING TOO HOT. BUT THEN AGAIN...
GREETINGS, EARTHMEN, I COME IN PEACE.
WHERE MIGHT I FIND YOUR ESTEEMED LEADER...
...STAN LEE!
WHOK
HOLLYWOOD.
IS THAT IN NEW YORK?
EEP!
WE GOTCHA NOW, YA LITTLE TWERP!
NOW YOU'RE GONNA DIE!
POP
CATCH ME IF YOU CAN!
WOLVERINE, NO-- THE PROFESSOR!
HE DID IT TO US AGAIN!
HEADS UP, STORM-- HE'S COMIN' YOUR WAY!
YOU WERE SAYING...
LOT OF WEIRDOS IN THIS TOWN, Y'KNOW?

THE BEST OFFICE IN THE PLACE IS THE CORNER ONE OVERLOOKING PARK AVENUE AND 27TH STREET. OF COURSE IT BELONGS TO THE BOSS:
...MICHAEL HOBSON, VICE-PRESIDENT OF PUBLISHING
WITH HIM IS JIM SHOOTER (ALSO A VEEP), MARVEL'S EDITOR IN CHIEF.
HAVE YOU SEEN THESE EXPENSE ACCOUNT VOUCHERS, JIM? SOMETIMES I WONDER IF ALL HE DOES IS MOOCH LUNCHES FROM HIS EDITORS.
WHAT CAN I SAY, MIKE? CHRIS IS A GROWING BOY.
HE KEEPS IT UP, HE WON'T EVEN BE ABLE TO FIT THROUGH A DOOR.
YES, LYNN?
JIM'S NEEDED IN THE BULLPEN. THEY SAY IT'S URGENT.
A CRISIS ALREADY?! THE DAY'S BARELY BEGUN!
LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE-- NO ONE AROUND HERE EVER GETS BORED.
THEY NEVER LIVE LONG ENOUGH.
HURRY BACK. WE HAVE A LOT MORE TO DISCUSS BEFORE OUR MEETING WITH JIM GALTON.*
RELAX, MIKE--DID YOU EVER SEE A PROBLEM I COULDN'T HANDLE?
*PRESIDENT OF CADENCE PUBLISHING, MARVEL'S BIG BOSS--Louise.
WHY IS IT THOSE SOUND LIKE FAMOUS LAST WORDS...?
BAM WHAM
YEOW
SNA-
CH
OMP
UH, MIKE...ABOUT THAT PROBLEM...


MEANWHILE...
STAN'S IN CALIFORNIA! HE HASN'T BEEN BASED HERE FOR YEARS!
GREAT! THAT WEIRDO WANTS LEE SO BAD, LET'S SEND HIM OUT TO THE COAST AFTER HIM!
THAT ISN'T FAIR, WOLVIE. THIS ISN'T Mr. LEE'S FAULT.
OUR GOAL IS NOT TO GET RID OF OUR FOE, WOLVERINE-- MUCH AS WE'D LIKE TO-- BUT TO STOP THIS MADCAP RAMPAGE...
... AND REGAIN ALL THE STOLEN PROPERTY.

WE NEED TO COMPLETELY, INSTANTLY NEUTRALIZE HIS POWER.
ROGUE, YOU ARE BEST EQUIPPED TO DO THAT.
LIKE *HECK!*
AH'VE NEVER USED MAH TALENT ON AN ALIEN. AH DON'T KNOW WHAT'LL HAPPEN!


WHEN AH ABSORBED Ms. MARVEL'S MEM'RIES AN' ABILITIES, THAT TRANSFER WAS *PERMANENT*-- BECAUSE OF IT, AH'LL ALWAYS BE A LITTLE CRAZY.
S'POSE IT HAPPENS AGAIN?!
I UNDER-STAND-- AND SHARE-- YOUR FEAR.

THE BLAZES YOU DO.
BUT WE HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE.
Ms. MARVEL WAS YOUR FRIEND, ORORO. YOU'LL NEVER REALLY FORGIVE ME FOR WHAT AH DID TO HER. AH DIDN'T MEAN TO, AH'D GIVE ANYTHING TO PUT THINGS RIGHT...
...BUT THAT DOESN'T MATTER. YOU DON'T TRUST ME. YOU PROB'LY HOPE AH'LL BE KILLED.

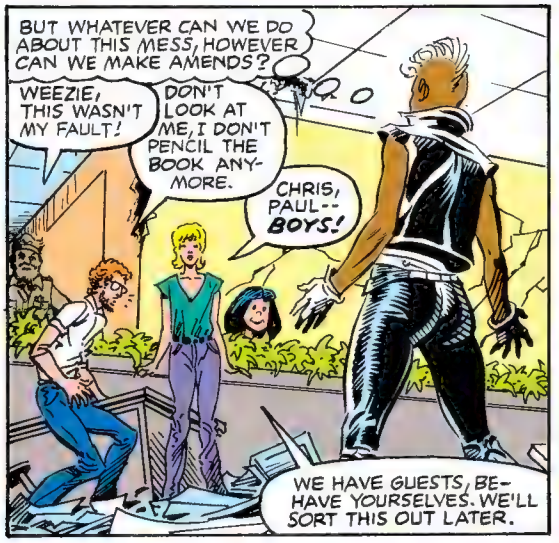
WELL, AH AIM T' *S'PRISE* YOU, HONEY-BUNCH!
PARTY'S OVER, IMP!
GOODNESS!

ZAP!
ROGUE!?!
I WAS AFRAID O' THIS. IT FIGURES THE LITTLE CREEP'D HAVE A POWER SHE COULDN'T ABSORB.
SHE--YOU-- ATTACKED ME!
SHE HURT ME!!!
IT WAS NO ACCIDENT, EITHER-- THAT WAS INTENTIONAL!
BOY, AM I EVER GOING TO MAKE HER REGRET IT!
YOU WANT THE LADY, BUB--
--YOU GOTTA GO THROUGH ME!
SNIKT
IF YOU INSIST, EARTHLING--!

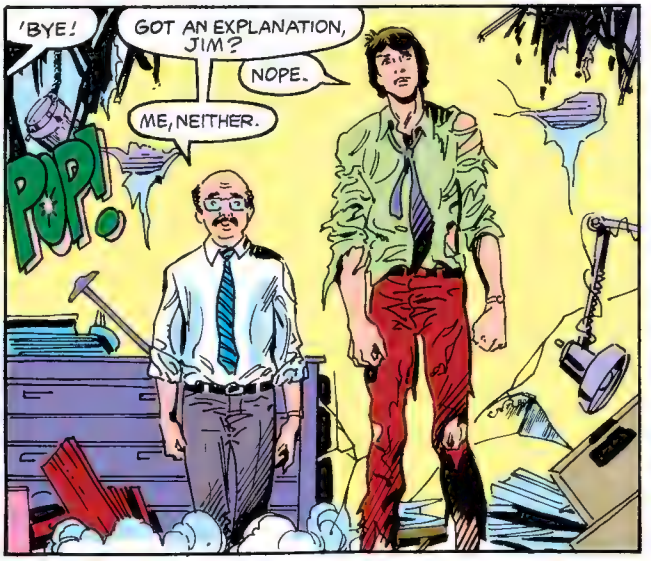
GO AHEAD, YOU MONSTER, DO YOUR *WORST!*
YOU'LL FIND THE X-MEN *READY* FOR YOU!
WHY DO YOU TALK TO ME LIKE THAT? I'M NO MONSTER.
PULL THE OTHER ONE, CHUMP.
I'M *NOT!*
TELL THAT TO ROGUE, BUB--SHE'S LUCKY SHE'S STILL BREATHING!
SHE CAUGHT ME BY SURPRISE. WHEN SHE TOUCHED ME AND I FELT MY LIFE ESSENCE--MY VERY BEING-- BEGIN TO DISSOLVE, I PANICKED.
I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT HER-- I DON'T WANT TO HURT ANYONE--
--I ONLY ACTED IN *SELF-DEFENSE.*
WHADDYA THINK *WE'VE* BEEN DOIN' ALL FLAMIN' NIGHT?!!
PLAYING THE GAME.
WHAT GAME, *MEIN HERR?*
WHY, THE *SCAVENGER HUNT,* OF COURSE.

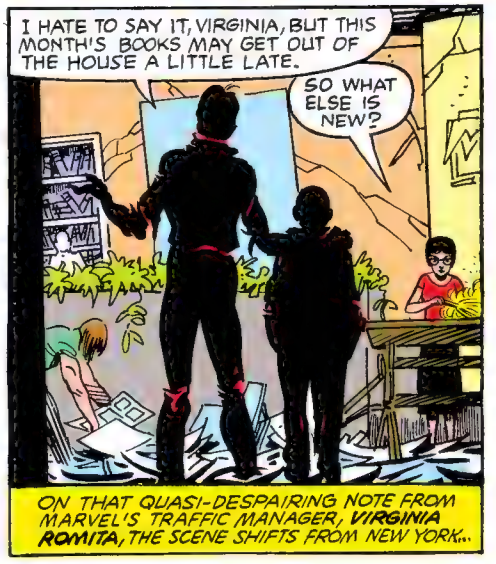
WHO ARE YOU?
I'M THE IMPOSSIBLE MAN, SOLE SURVIVOR OF THE PLANET POPPUP. ARE YOU ANGRY WITH ME?
YES.
I'M REALLY SORRY.
MERCIFUL GODDESS, HE IS SINCERE!

HE IS AS INNOCENT AS A CHILD, COMPLETELY OBLIVIOUS TO THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS ACTIONS.
I ASSUME YOUR SPOILS ARE HIDDEN SOMEWHERE?
YOU BET! I GOT SOME WONDERFUL STUFF, TOO! BUT STAN-THE-MAN WOULD HAVE BEEN THE BEST CATCH OF ALL!
I SUGGEST, IMPY, YOU TAKE US TO YOUR CACHE, WHERE YOU AND WE WILL HAVE A LITTLE TALK.

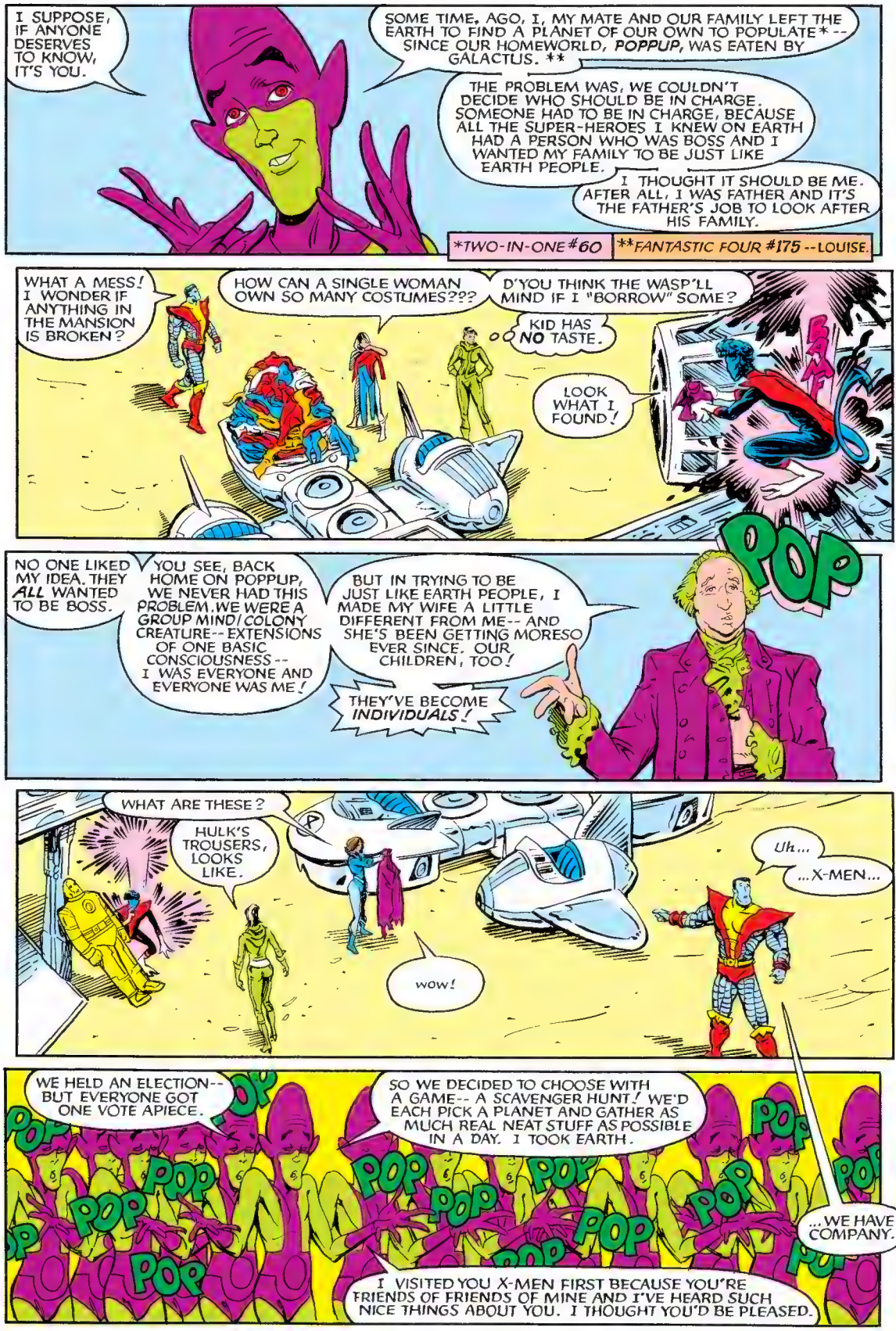

BUT WHATEVER CAN WE DO ABOUT THIS MESS, HOWEVER CAN WE MAKE AMENDS?
WEEZIE, THIS WASN'T MY FAULT!
DON'T LOOK AT ME, I DON'T PENCIL THE BOOK ANY-MORE.
CHRIS, PAUL-- BOYS!
WE HAVE GUESTS, BE-HAVE YOURSELVES. WE'LL SORT THIS OUT LATER.

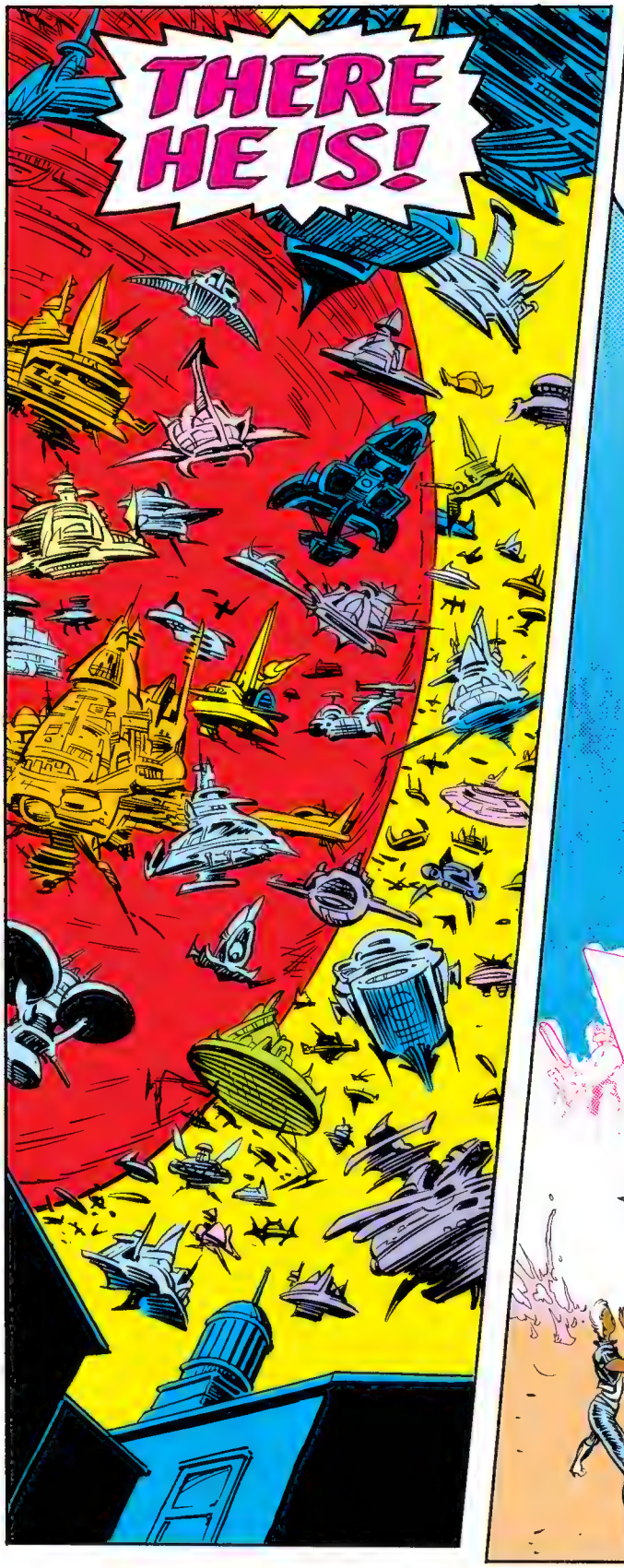
WE READY TA ROLL, TROOPS?
NICE, KITTY, NICE KITTY, NICE KITTY...
WOULD IT HELP, MARVELITES, IF WE SAID WE WERE REAL SORRY?

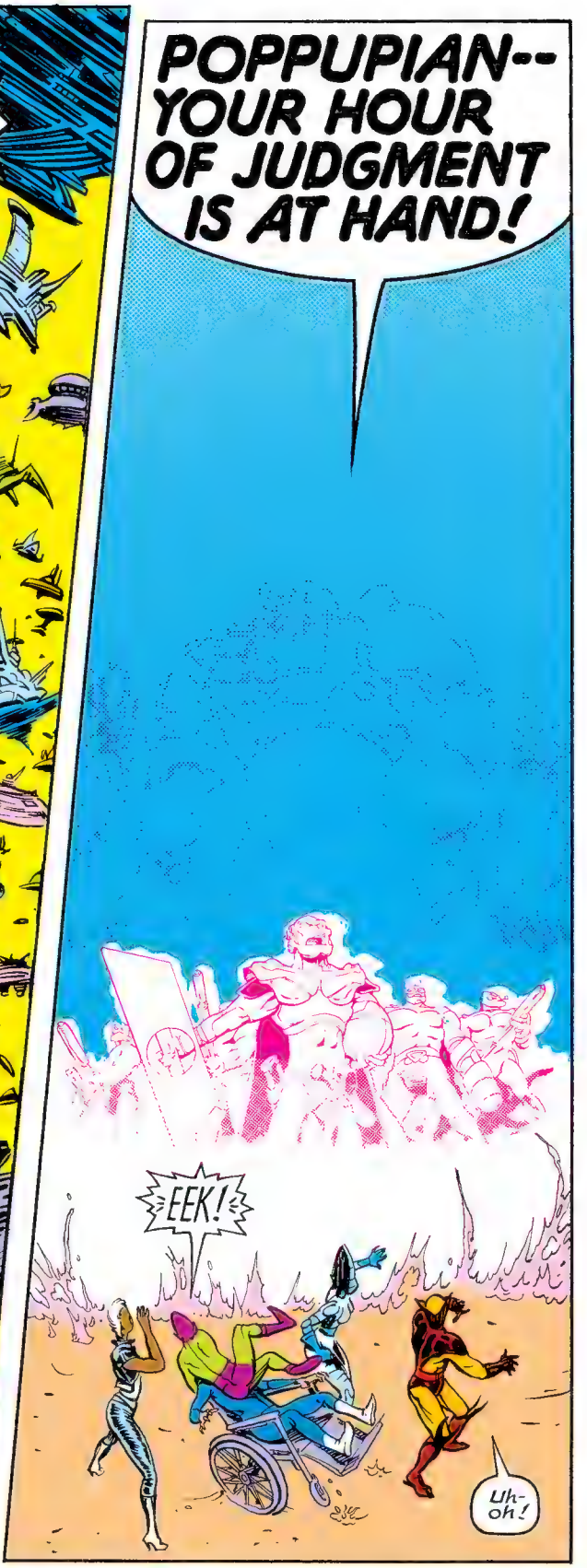

'BYE!
GOT AN EXPLANATION, JIM?
NOPE.
ME, NEITHER.
POP!


I HATE TO SAY IT, VIRGINIA, BUT THIS MONTH'S BOOKS MAY GET OUT OF THE HOUSE A LITTLE LATE.
SO WHAT ELSE IS NEW?
ON THAT QUASI-DESPAIRING NOTE FROM MARVEL'S TRAFFIC MANAGER, VIRGINIA ROMITA, THE SCENE SHIFTS FROM NEW YORK...

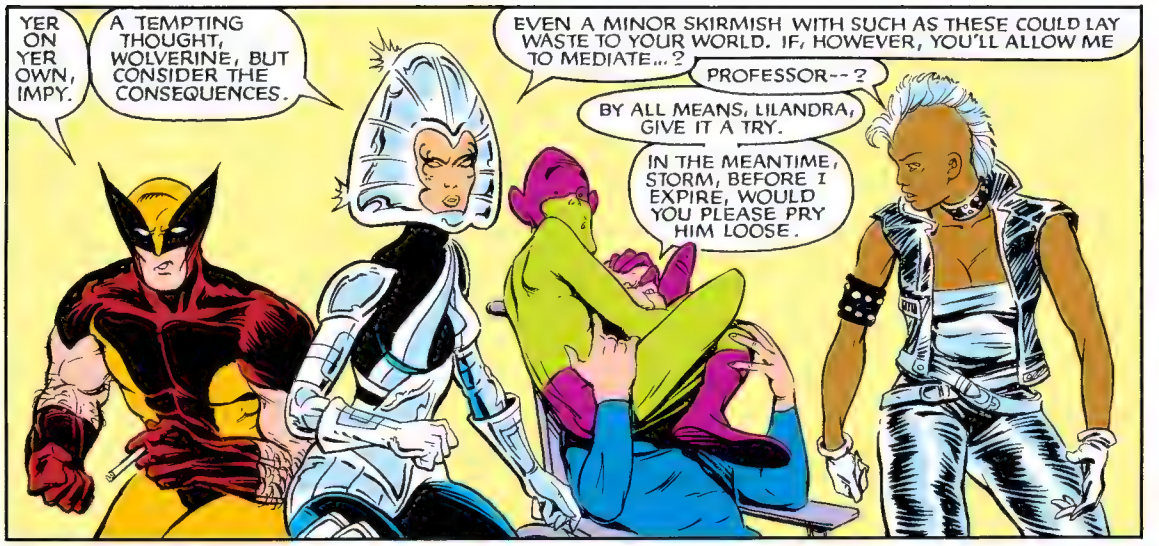
CHAPTER 6..
...THE GOBI DESERT--ABOUT AS REMOTE AND DESOLATE A PLACE AS EXISTS ON THE PLANET...
...GLAU...
UN...
YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN, ELF!
LOOK AT ALL THIS STUFF!
IMPY'S SURE BEEN ONE BUSY LITTLE CRITTER!
...BLICH!
RETURNING THESE ITEMS TO THEIR RIGHTFUL OWNERS WILL NOT BE EASY, PROFESSOR...
...ASSUMING THE IMPOSSIBLE MAN EVEN LETS US.
ISN'T IT MAGNIFICENT?! THIS IS THE BEST COLLECTION OF PRIZES IN THE UNIVERSE! AND I GOT THEM ALL FROM FRIENDS, OR BEINGS I LIKED.
THANKS F'R THE COMPLIMENT, BUB.
BUT WHY'D YOU DO IT? WHAT'S THIS ALL FOR?!?


I SUPPOSE, IF ANYONE DESERVES TO KNOW, IT'S YOU.
SOME TIME, AGO, I, MY MATE AND OUR FAMILY LEFT THE EARTH TO FIND A PLANET OF OUR OWN TO POPULATE* -- SINCE OUR HOMEWORLD, POPPUP, WAS EATEN BY GALACTUS. **
THE PROBLEM WAS, WE COULDN'T DECIDE WHO SHOULD BE IN CHARGE. SOMEONE HAD TO BE IN CHARGE, BECAUSE ALL THE SUPER-HEROES I KNEW ON EARTH HAD A PERSON WHO WAS BOSS AND I WANTED MY FAMILY TO BE JUST LIKE EARTH PEOPLE.
I THOUGHT IT SHOULD BE ME. AFTER ALL, I WAS FATHER AND IT'S THE FATHER'S JOB TO LOOK AFTER HIS FAMILY.
*TWO-IN-ONE #60
**FANTASTIC FOUR #175 --LOUISE.
WHAT A MESS! I WONDER IF ANYTHING IN THE MANSION IS BROKEN?
HOW CAN A SINGLE WOMAN OWN SO MANY COSTUMES???
D'YOU THINK THE WASP'LL MIND IF I "BORROW" SOME?
KID HAS NO TASTE.
LOOK WHAT I FOUND!
BAM
NO ONE LIKED MY IDEA. THEY ALL WANTED TO BE BOSS.
YOU SEE, BACK HOME ON POPPUP, WE NEVER HAD THIS PROBLEM. WE WERE A GROUP MIND/COLONY CREATURE-- EXTENSIONS OF ONE BASIC CONSCIOUSNESS -- I WAS EVERYONE AND EVERYONE WAS ME!
BUT IN TRYING TO BE JUST LIKE EARTH PEOPLE, I MADE MY WIFE A LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM ME-- AND SHE'S BEEN GETTING MORESO EVER SINCE. OUR CHILDREN, TOO!
THEY'VE BECOME INDIVIDUALS!
POP
WHAT ARE THESE?
HULK'S TROUSERS, LOOKS LIKE.
WOW!
Uh...
...X-MEN...
WE HELD AN ELECTION-- BUT EVERYONE GOT ONE VOTE APIECE.
SO WE DECIDED TO CHOOSE WITH A GAME-- A SCAVENGER HUNT! WE'D EACH PICK A PLANET AND GATHER AS MUCH REAL NEAT STUFF AS POSSIBLE IN A DAY. I TOOK EARTH.
...WE HAVE COMPANY.
I VISITED YOU X-MEN FIRST BECAUSE YOU'RE FRIENDS OF FRIENDS OF MINE AND I'VE HEARD SUCH NICE THINGS ABOUT YOU. I THOUGHT YOU'D BE PLEASED.
POP


THERE HE IS!


POPPUPIAN-- YOUR HOUR OF JUDGMENT IS AT HAND!
EEK!
Uh-oh!

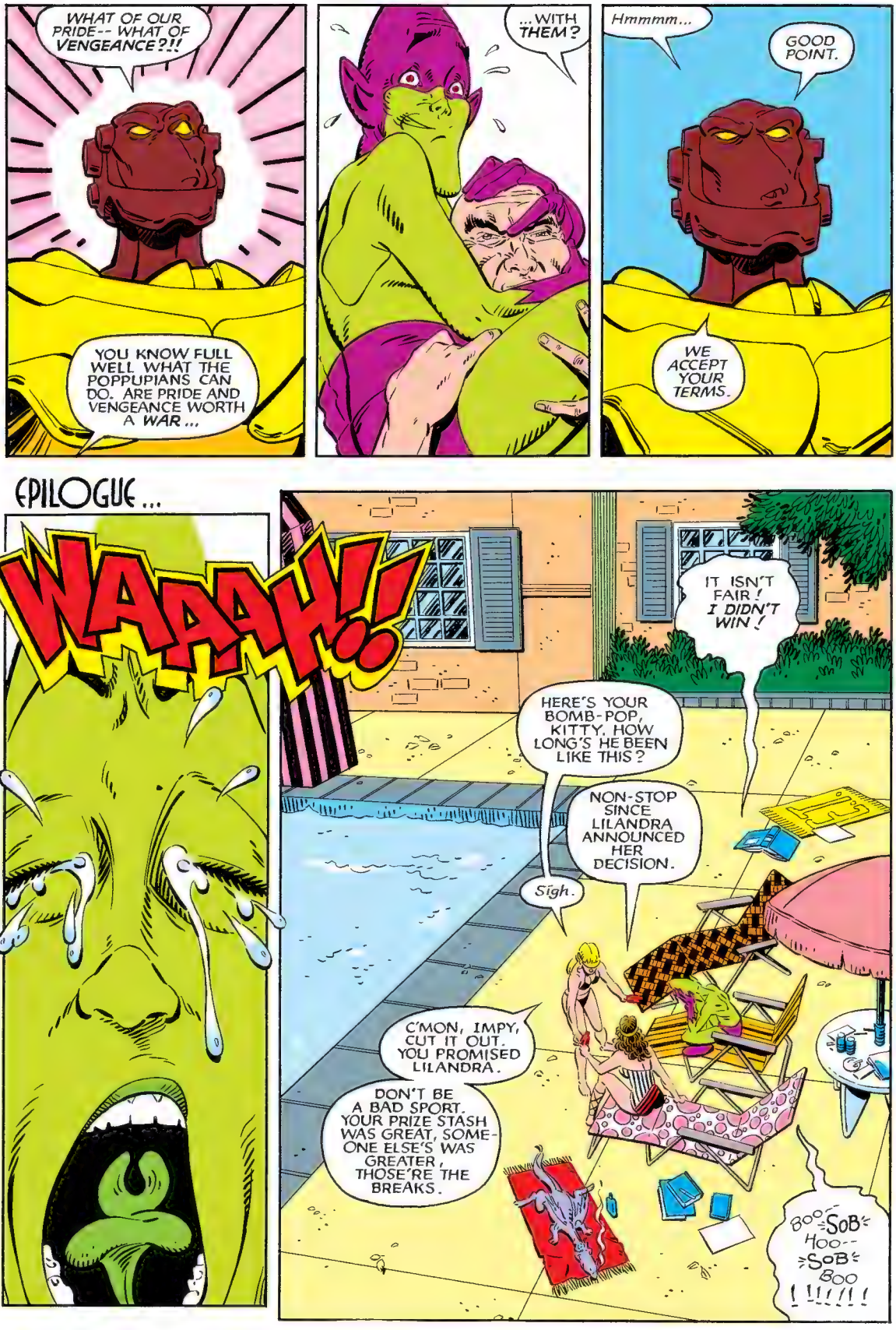
WE HAVE FOLLOWED THIS TRANSGRESSOR ACROSS THE GALAXY, COMPILING A LIST OF CRIMES AGAINST OUR VARIOUS WORLDS-- AND PERSONS-- TOO NUMEROUS TO MENTION!
SUFFICE TO SAY, THIS ONE AND HIS MISBEGOTTEN PROGENY HAVE WREAKED UNTOLD HAVOC.
WE ARE NOT AMUSED!!
WE SHALL HAVE RETRIBUTION-- FROM THE ACCURSED POPPUPIAN...
... AND ANY FOOL ENOUGH TO DEFEND HIM!


YER ON YER OWN, IMPY.
A TEMPTING THOUGHT, WOLVERINE, BUT CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES.
EVEN A MINOR SKIRMISH WITH SUCH AS THESE COULD LAY WASTE TO YOUR WORLD. IF, HOWEVER, YOU'LL ALLOW ME TO MEDIATE...?
PROFESSOR--?
BY ALL MEANS, LILANDRA, GIVE IT A TRY.
IN THE MEANTIME, STORM, BEFORE I EXPIRE, WOULD YOU PLEASE PRY HIM LOOSE.

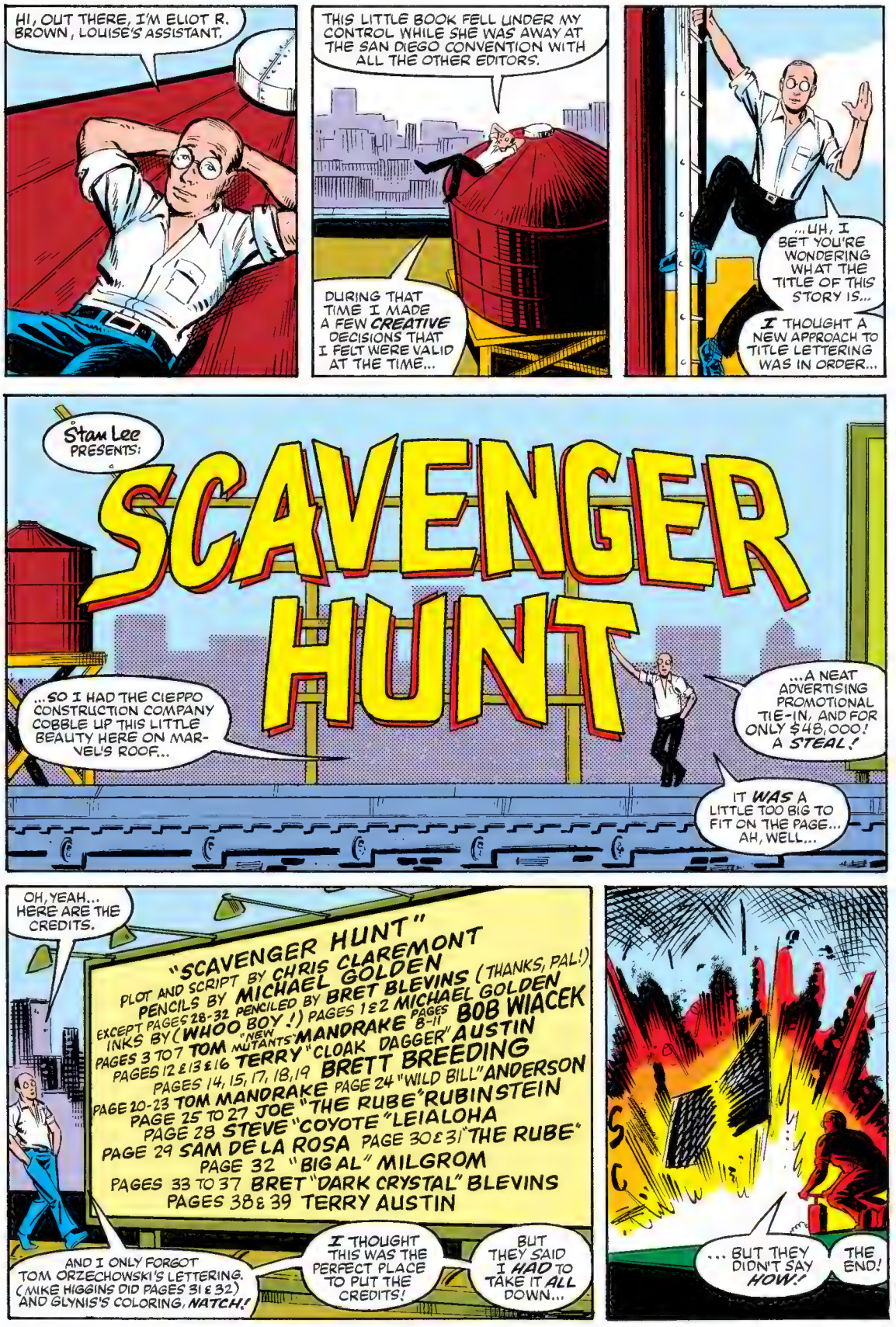
BOTHNIAN, I AM *LILANDRA, MAJESTRIX SHI'AR*--THOUGH MY USURPER SISTER NOW HOLDS MY THRONE...
YOUR NAME IS KNOWN TO US, EMPRESS, YOUR COURAGE AND WISDOM LEGEND.
THERE IS NEED NEITHER FOR THREATS NOR VIOLENCE. WE HAVE SUFFERED AS YOU -- BUT CAN WE NOT ARRIVE AT AN AMICABLE, PEACEFUL RESOLUTION TO THE SITUATION?

*ACCUSATION: POPPUPIAN STOLE **SHIPHOME**! ULTIMATE CRIME, ULTIMATE SIN!*
SOLUTION: TERMINATION, BY HARSHEST MEANS POSSIBLE!
WERE ANY SENTIENTS HARMED, AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THE SCAVENGER HUNT?
NO.
WAS ANY OF THE STOLEN PROPERTY DAMAGED?
NO.

IF THEY WILL TELL ME THE RULES -- AND SWEAR TO ABIDE BY MY DECISION -- I VOLUNTEER TO JUDGE THE POPPUPIANS' HUNT.
MOREOVER, IF THEY THEN RETURN ALL THEIR PRIZES TO WHERE THEY ACQUIRED THEM, IN THE CONDITION THEY FOUND THEM, AND PROMISE ***NEVER*** TO DO THIS AGAIN...
...WILL THAT NOT SATISFY THE INJURED PARTIES?


WHAT OF OUR PRIDE-- WHAT OF VENGEANCE?!!
YOU KNOW FULL WELL WHAT THE POPPUPIANS CAN DO. ARE PRIDE AND VENGEANCE WORTH A WAR...
...WITH THEM?
Hmmmm...
GOOD POINT.
WE ACCEPT YOUR TERMS.
EPILOGUE...
WAAAH!!
IT ISN'T FAIR! I DIDN'T WIN!
HERE'S YOUR BOMB-POP, KITTY. HOW LONG'S HE BEEN LIKE THIS?
NON-STOP SINCE LILANDRA ANNOUNCED HER DECISION.
Sigh.
C'MON, IMPY, CUT IT OUT. YOU PROMISED LILANDRA.
DON'T BE A BAD SPORT. YOUR PRIZE STASH WAS GREAT, SOMEONE ELSE'S WAS GREATER, THOSE'RE THE BREAKS.
BOO-SOB HOO--SOB BOO!!!!!!

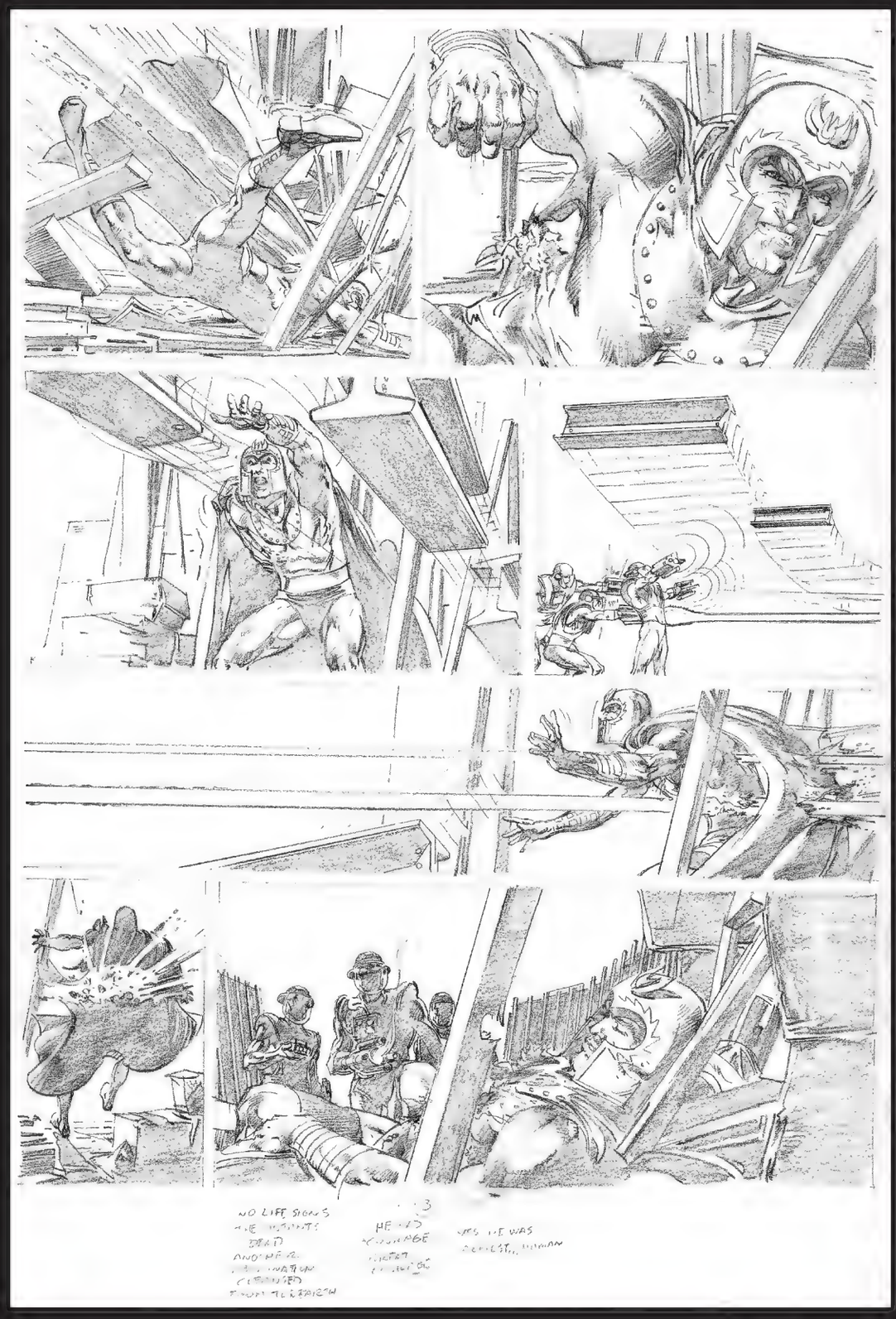
THERE ARE A LOT OF THINGS I'D LIKE-- KITTY, TOO, I'LL BET-- THAT'LL NEVER HAPPEN.
Yummm -- THIS HITS THE SPOT.
=?!?=
LIFE ISN'T FAIR, LITTLE FRIEND, AND YOU SHOULDN'T EXPECT IT TO BE. IT SIMPLY IS. COME WHAT MAY, YOU MAKE THE BEST OF IT.
=!?!=
I... SUPPOSE SO. BUT I REALLY WANTED TO WIN.
KITTY, WHAT'S THAT YOU'RE EATING?
ICE CREAM.
IS IT GOOD?
Uh-HUH!
I'VE NEVER HAD ANY BEFORE. COULD I TRY A TASTE?
POP
ILLYANA, ♡ DO YOU SEE ♡♡ WHAT I SEE???
AND ♡♡♡ HOW!
ARRRGH!!
WHOOPEEE!!!
GRUMP GRUMP GRUMP
THIS, FOLKS, IS THE...
...EVER-LOVIN', EVER-LIVIN' END!


HI, OUT THERE, I'M ELIOT R. BROWN, LOUISE'S ASSISTANT.
THIS LITTLE BOOK FELL UNDER MY CONTROL WHILE SHE WAS AWAY AT THE SAN DIEGO CONVENTION WITH ALL THE OTHER EDITORS.
DURING THAT TIME I MADE A FEW CREATIVE DECISIONS THAT I FELT WERE VALID AT THE TIME...
...UH, I BET YOU'RE WONDERING WHAT THE TITLE OF THIS STORY IS...
I THOUGHT A NEW APPROACH TO TITLE LETTERING WAS IN ORDER...
Stan Lee PRESENTS:
SCAVENGER HUNT
...SO I HAD THE CIEPPO CONSTRUCTION COMPANY COBBLE UP THIS LITTLE BEAUTY HERE ON MARVEL'S ROOF...
...A NEAT ADVERTISING PROMOTIONAL TIE-IN, AND FOR ONLY $48,000! A STEAL!
IT WAS A LITTLE TOO BIG TO FIT ON THE PAGE... AH, WELL...
OH, YEAH... HERE ARE THE CREDITS.
"SCAVENGER HUNT"
PLOT AND SCRIPT BY CHRIS CLAREMONT
PENCILS BY MICHAEL GOLDEN
EXCEPT PAGES 28-32 PENCILED BY BRET BLEVINS (THANKS, PAL!)
INKS BY (WHOO BOY!) PAGES 1&2 MICHAEL GOLDEN
PAGES 3 TO 7 TOM "NEW MUTANTS" MANDRAKE PAGES 8-11 BOB WIACEK
PAGES 12&13&16 TERRY "CLOAK DAGGER" AUSTIN
PAGES 14, 15, 17, 18, 19 BRETT BREEDING
PAGE 20-23 TOM MANDRAKE PAGE 24 "WILD BILL" ANDERSON
PAGE 25 TO 27 JOE "THE RUBE" RUBINSTEIN
PAGE 28 STEVE "COYOTE" LEIALOHA
PAGE 29 SAM DE LA ROSA PAGE 30&31 "THE RUBE"
PAGE 32 "BIG AL" MILGROM
PAGES 33 TO 37 BRET "DARK CRYSTAL" BLEVINS
PAGES 38&39 TERRY AUSTIN
AND I ONLY FORGOT TOM ORZECHOWSKI'S LETTERING. (MIKE HIGGINS DID PAGES 31&32) AND GLYNIS'S COLORING. NATCH!
I THOUGHT THIS WAS THE PERFECT PLACE TO PUT THE CREDITS!
BUT THEY SAID I HAD TO TAKE IT ALL DOWN...
... BUT THEY DIDN'T SAY HOW!
THE END!

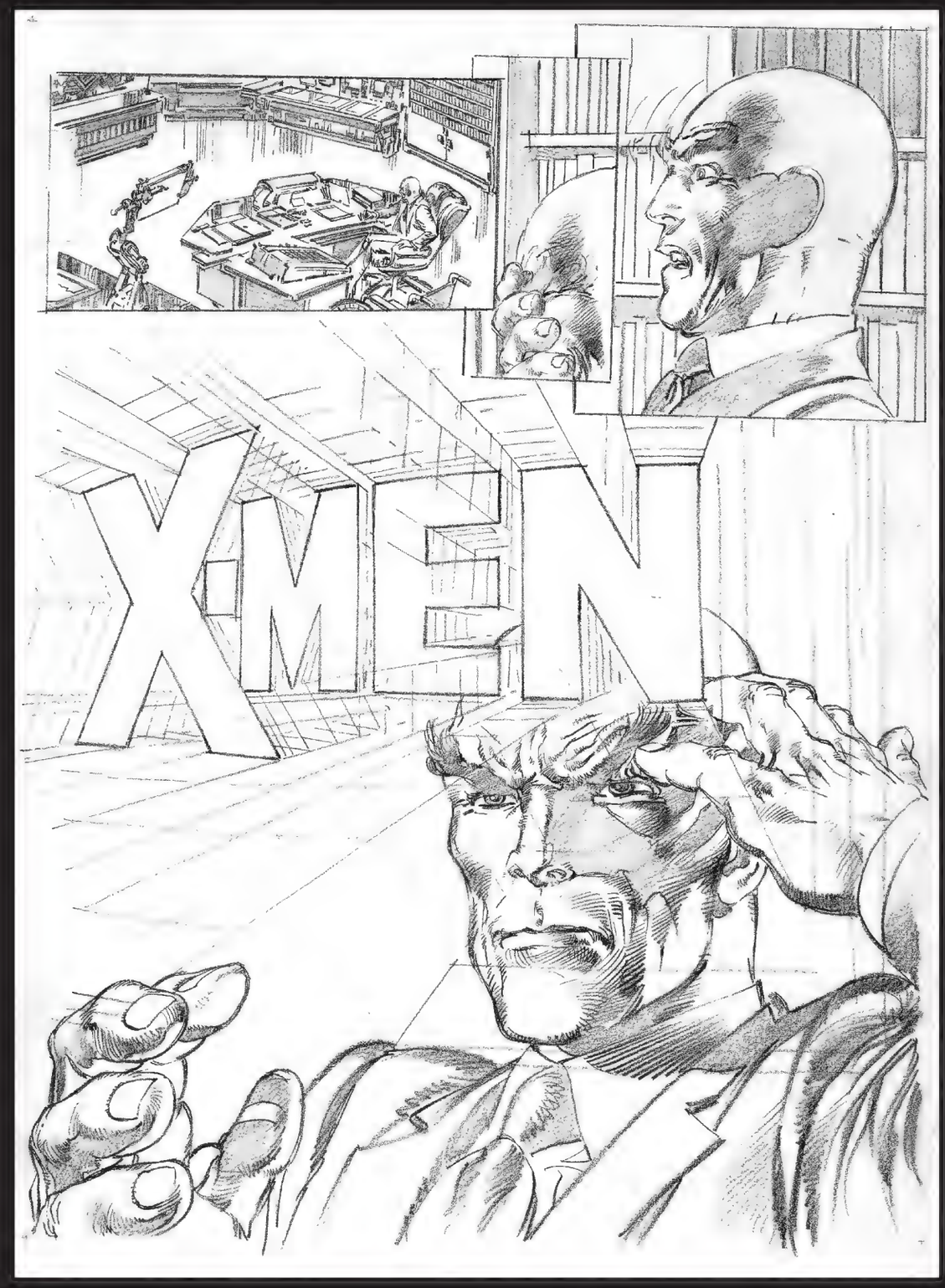
Legendary X-Men artist Neal Adams was originally tapped to be the artist for "God Loves, Man Kills," but after pencilling six pages he had to bow out of the project.

Marvel Graphic Novel #5 "God Loves, Man Kills" unused page 2 pencil art by Neal Adams

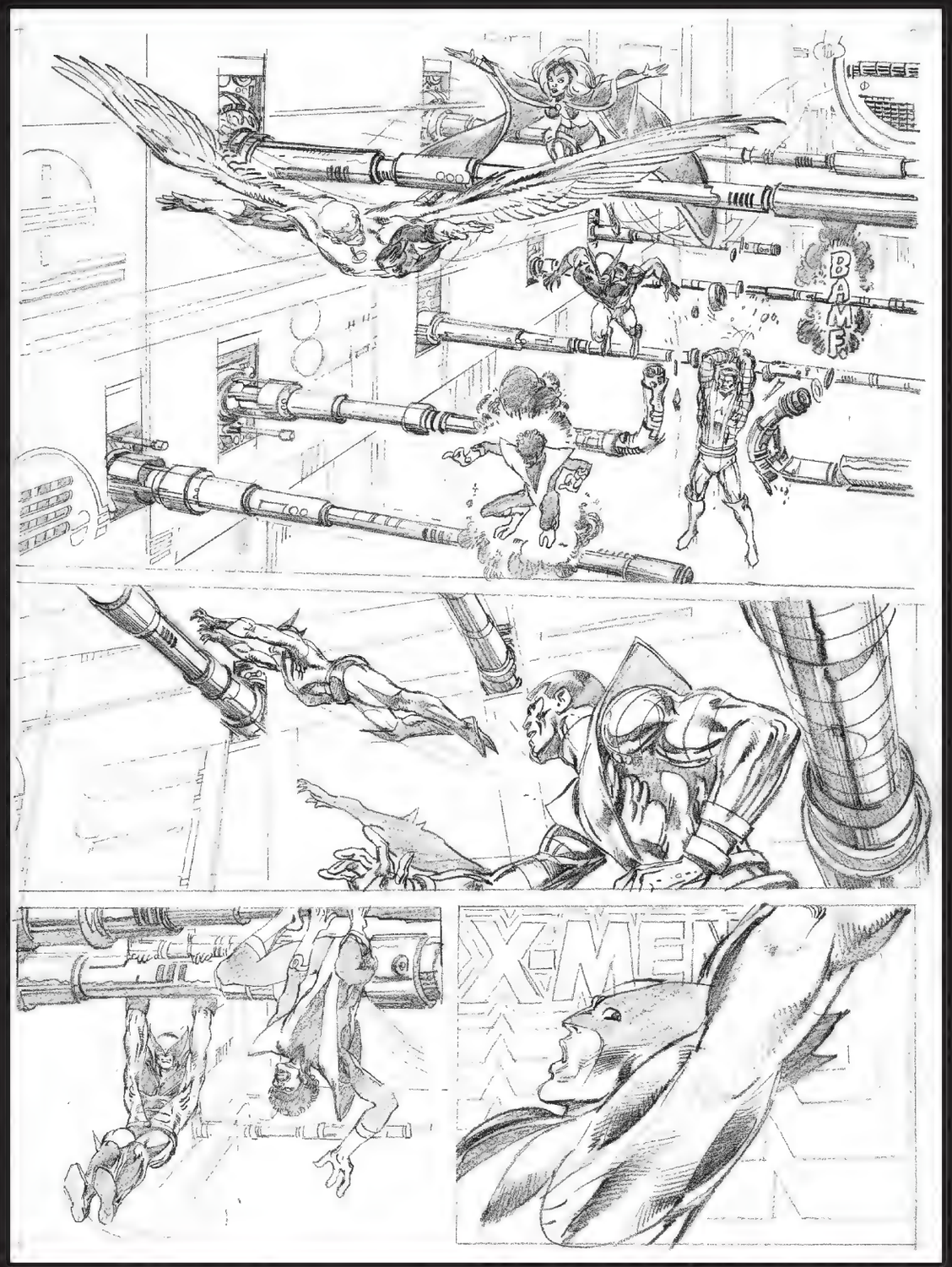
Marvel Graphic Novel #5 "God Loves, Man Kills" unused page 3 pencil art
by Neal Adams



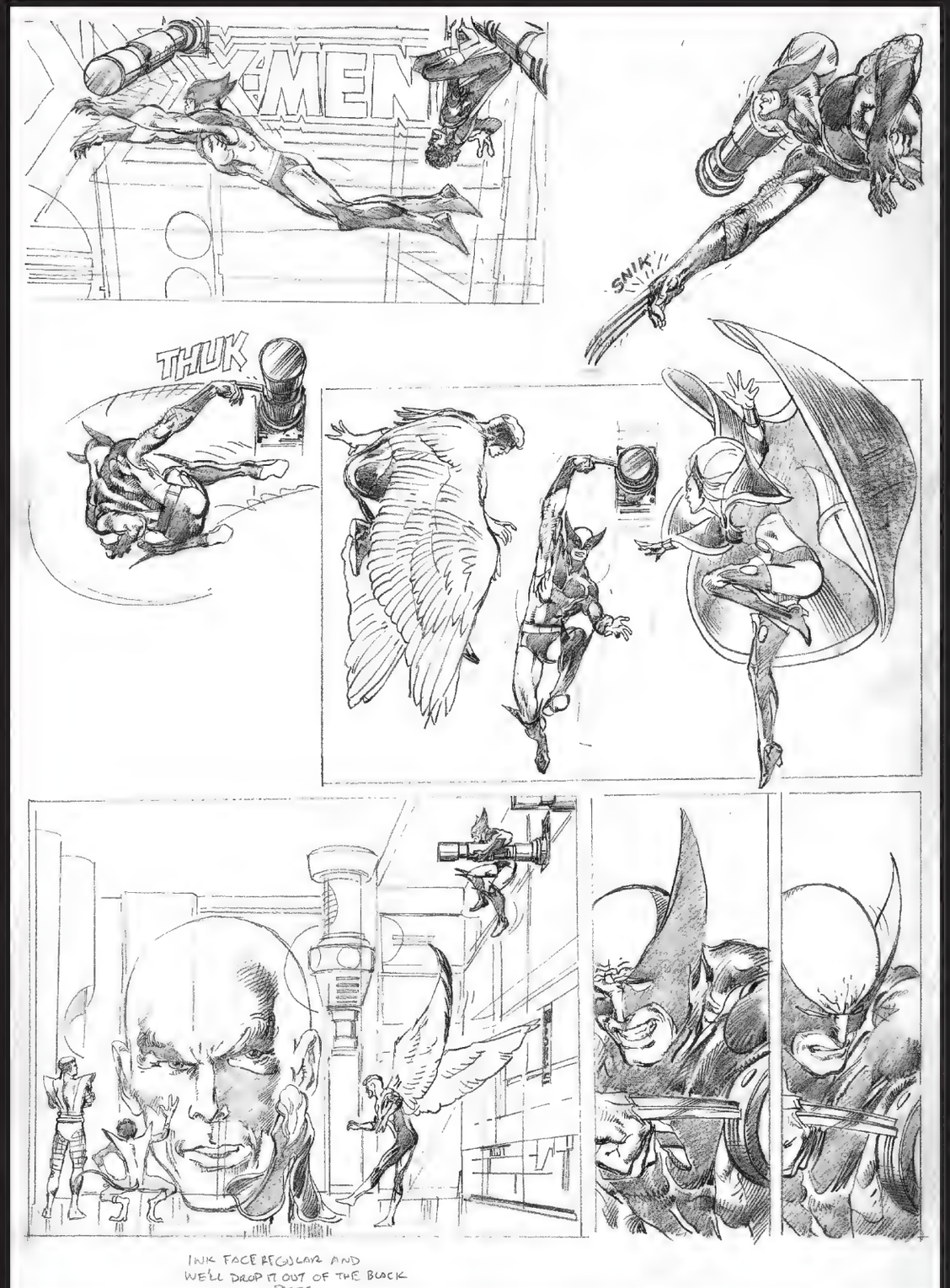
Marvel Graphic Novel #5 "God Loves, Man Kills" unused page 4 pencil art
by Neal Adams



Marvel Graphic Novel #5 "God Loves, Man Kills" unused page 5 pencil art
by Neal Adams



Marvel Graphic Novel #5 "God Loves, Man Kills" unused page 6 pencil art
by Neal Adams



INTRODUCTION

BY CHRIS CLAREMONT

FROM *X-MEN: GOD LOVES, MAN KILLS* (2003)

Pop quiz: What's the question most commonly asked of writers?

Answer: Where do you get your ideas?

From here, the colloquy can turn profound, sublime or (very often) just plain silly, as betokened by the standard writer's response, "the Idea Bank in Poughkeepsie." You'd be amazed how many folks would subsequently call 4-1-1 and try to get the number ("Is that a 'savings bank' or a 'national bank'?") See? Silly. I told you. All of this is to disguise the fundamental reality of our craft, which is that we all start with ourselves, and a blank sheet of paper (or a blank display screen). Our task is to fill that page with words, ideas, a story. The tools we employ to that end are our imagination and our craft. But it starts with that empty page. What gets you going? There's no set answer. Sometimes it can be a primal visual image, or a notion prompted by a conversation, the news, the soup you had for lunch; anything and everything can provide inspiration. (That also includes the need to pay the mortgage, or the reality—in comics, anyway—that a penciler is dependent on your productivity to pay his bills.) Sadly, many of those seeds fall on fallow ground, or they sprout ideas that start out promisingly but wither and fade. The idea itself is the ten-percent inspiration; the hammering it into a viable, successful, memorable story is the ninety-percent perspiration that follows.

So—where did this story, this particular graphic novel, come from?

Marvel, and the comics industry itself, was a very different place almost two decades ago.

The industry, which had been in what we all thought was a terminal decline only a few years previously, was exploding both commercially and creatively. Everywhere you turned, there were new talents, new formats, new concepts. It felt like a revolution, both in terms of the stories being told and the means we had to tell them. There was no need to restrict ourselves to the classic paradigm of costumed super heroes, portrayed in monthly 22-page serial increments. We could tell stories in a longer form; we could pitch concepts that were "outside the box," including those that were creator-owned as opposed to the more traditional work-for-hire. For the first time, there was a growing sense that comics, like mainstream publishing, could be approached as a partnership between creators and publishers, with both sides equitably sharing the risks of publishing and the potential rewards. One of the engines driving that change, certainly at Marvel, was the *X-Men*. I mean, who'd'a thought—that this title, resurrected as a mid-list bimonthly only a few years before, would quickly become the commercial benchmark by which the field would be measured? Somehow, this was the right title, at the right time, for the right audience. But that's shoptalk. What about the world in which we lived, the background against which these stories appeared? I came into comics at the tail end of the '60s, gleefully embracing the fast-paced, irreverent, hyper-emotional story model that had been established by Stan Lee and continued (so ably in terms of the *X-Men*) by Roy Thomas. In those days, since all of us figured the business didn't have long to last, there was a very strong sense that "anything goes." We didn't have to worry about "established continuity"; the Marvel Universe we were playing in was so young that we were creating most of that continuity.

So here we are in the early 1980s. Ronald Reagan is president and a wave of creative conservatism is sweeping the nation, pitched as a backlash from the heartland to the unpatriotic and hedonistic attitudes and mores of the '60s and '70s. According to them, the country was returning to bedrock, traditional values and beliefs, both political and moral. Leading that charge—and by extension, the avalanche of criticism of the prevalent "lefty" "New York/LA" lifestyles—were a coterie of TV evangelists, trumpeting their born-again, fundamentalist vision of the Bible across the national airwaves. There were the long-established ministries of Billy Graham, Oral Roberts and Robert Shuler (sic), plus their newer counterparts such as Pat Robertson (the 700 Club), Jerry Falwell (the Moral Majority), Jimmy Swaggart, and Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker (the PTL Club), among many others.

The vision that many of these ministries espoused was pure and focused. The Bible was the font of wisdom, it was the path to salvation, not only for the souls of the individual parishioners, but through those individuals for the nation itself. Theirs was a creed that offered what was presented as a more vital and viable and relevant alternative to the traditional denominations. Regrettably to me (and here, I'm afraid, this piece becomes somewhat personal), it also seemed from an outsider's perspective to be increasingly exclusionary. Other faiths, other branches of the same faith, sounded as if they were being dismissed, which carried disturbing echoes of the growing fundamentalist movement that was sweeping the Islamic world. Despite acknowledgments from the ministries in various public forums of the need for tolerance, and the recognition that America is a pluralistic society, there remained—to my ears, at least—an underlying sense of "my way, or the highway." You either accepted the Word of God wholly and unreservedly, or you didn't, and if you didn't, you were damned. At the same time, these ministries were beginning to advance a broad-based social and political agenda, hoping to reshape the national landscape in terms of their faith. Now, we're talking primal structures here. We're talking about faith, not only in a supreme deity but also, by extension, in the ministers who present those beliefs to their congregations. Here we have ministers asking—some might say, requiring—absolute trust from their congregations, absolute belief that what is being asked of them is true, that the cause they are being asked to follow is just and righteous. This is a weapon of extraordinary power, as was demonstrated not only by the actions of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, but most absolutely by the actions of Christ himself. And yet, these ministers are only human, and to be human is to be fallible. In every war that's ever been fought, ministers on both sides have called for victory in the name of God, have stated that God is on their side. But if both sides believe in the same God, which one is correct?

Mutants in the Marvel Universe have always stood as a metaphor for the underclass, the outsiders; they represent the ultimate minority. Suppose, I began to wonder, a man of faith—for what he considered the most righteous of reasons and in perfect consistency with his Manichaean perception of the world—put forward the proposition that mutants are creatures of the Devil. There is good and there is evil, and mutants by the very fact of their existence fall into the latter category. That they are not human, that they are a threat to the hegemony of God's Chosen (i.e., what we now call baseline humanity), that their very existence is an affront to God's plan for the world. Suppose he chose to act on those beliefs? Ours is celebrated as a secular society. We are a nation "under God," but the definition of what "God" represents is left open. It is, I have always believed, meant to embrace a broad spectrum of faiths, whether held by a single individual or by tens of millions. How then do we reconcile the beliefs of one group of citizens with those of another? How do we subordinate—or can we, or should we—the commitments required by those faiths to the necessities of living in a pluralistic hegemony?

For me, this story grew out of a time where voices of casual intolerance were very much abroad in the land, where espousing views that stood apart from what was considered the "mainstream" could have serious and lasting consequences. In William Stryker, I wanted to create a man of faith whose sincerity could not be questioned. He is true in his beliefs, but those beliefs have led him down a path that could have terrible and lasting repercussions for a significant segment of the populace. In the X-Men are people of many cultures and different faiths—Nightcrawler is a staunch Catholic, Kitty Pryde, a Jew—yet that aspect of their lives is completely overshadowed by what is for Stryker the seminal reality of their existence: They are mutants. Nothing else is of consequence.

When I wrote the story, I read my Bible cover to cover, more than once—which I hadn't done since college—and I still have the dog-eared and heavily annotated copy on my bookshelf. In traveling the country, I spend Sunday after Sunday listening to media ministers both local and national. The graphic novel as it evolved grew into a plea that, no matter what the dictates of faith, we must all be bound by our conscience as individuals. That to me is the nature of free will. We come to a point of choice, both in terms of our faith as moral beings and our lives as good citizens. For some, actions in a civil arena grow from their faith, like a tree from a sapling; for others, the reverse—their actions in a societal sense must stand in opposition to tenets of their faith.

William Stryker acted from his own perception of his faith. Yet at the same time, the people he was acting against were also—and remain—people of faith themselves. Is Nightcrawler's faith in the divine any less valid because Stryker believes him a creature of the Devil? And if Nightcrawler's faith is valid and true, what then of Stryker's condemnation?

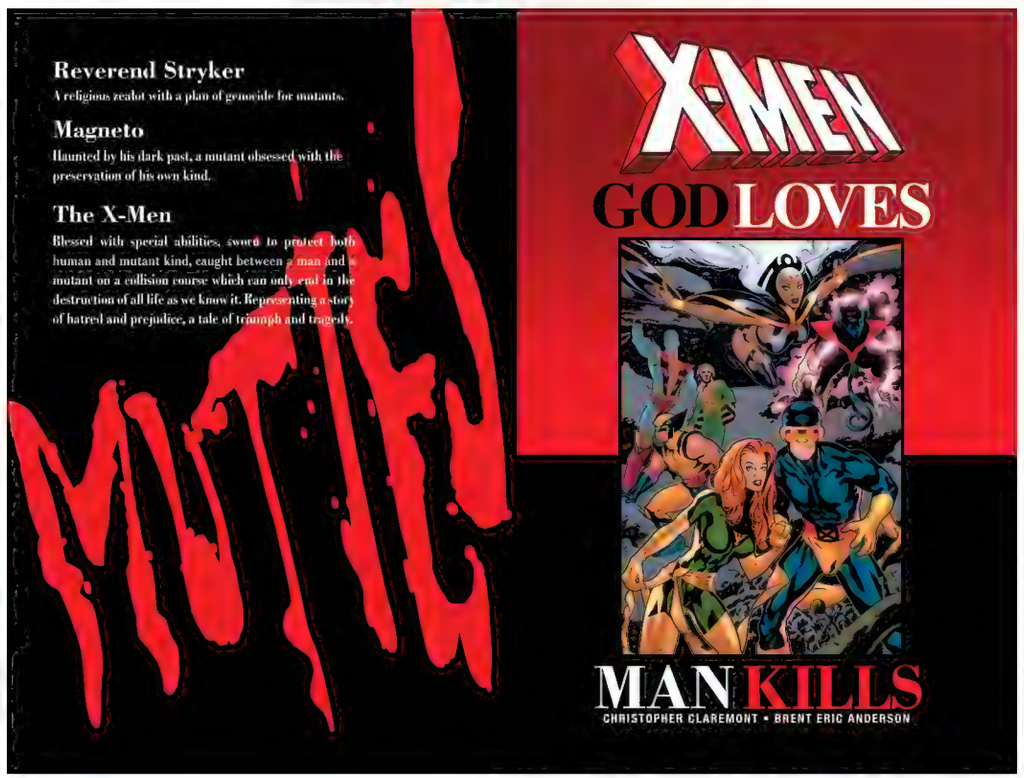
Are we all, in some manner or shape or form, children of God? Or are some of us perhaps more beloved than others? Therein, for me, lay the crux of the conflict in the graphic novel, one that lasts to this day. Faith lies at the most fundamental core of our being as sentient creatures, this need to believe in something

greater than ourselves, this almost inherent acknowledgment of the miracle of creation. But as faith is personal and unique to us as individuals, so then must also be our acceptance of responsibility for those actions that derive from it. Because in the end, while we remain individuals, we reside in a community. For the community to thrive, we need to find ways to get along, to play nice with one another. We need to cherish that which binds us, and accept with a measure of tolerance some of the things that make us different.

Why was this story written? What makes it special? Ultimately, I think, it grew out of two quotes that pretty much defined my own adolescence. One was from Martin Luther King, one of his most celebrated lines, which I've used myself in describing my approach to the X-Men: "I dream of a world where my children and their grandchildren will be judged, not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." The other, from Ted Kennedy, eulogizing his murdered brother, Robert: "Some dream of things that never were and say, why? I dream of things that are yet to be and say, why not?"

The irony of *God Loves* is that it was very much of its time and place, and yet, almost twenty years later, the sentiments—and the inspirations that brought it into being—retain their relevance. People are still judged more by the color of their skin, and the nation of their origin, and the faith they espouse, than their character. And I still find myself dreaming of a time when all of that is behind us and saying, why not?

Chris Claremont
Brooklyn, New York
March 2003


Reverend Stryker
A religious zealot with a plan of genocide for mutants.
Magneto
Haunted by his dark past, a mutant obsessed with the preservation of his own kind.
The X-Men
Blessed with special abilities, sworn to protect both human and mutant kind, caught between a man and a mutant on a collision course which can only end in the destruction of all life as we know it. Representing a story of hatred and prejudice, a tale of triumph and tragedy.
MUTIES
X-MEN
GOD LOVES
MAN KILLS
CHRISTOPHER CLAREMONT • BRENT ERIC ANDERSON

X-Men: God Loves, Man Kills (2003) cover by Adam Hughes

X-Men: God Loves, Man Kills (1994) cover art
by Bill Sienkiewicz

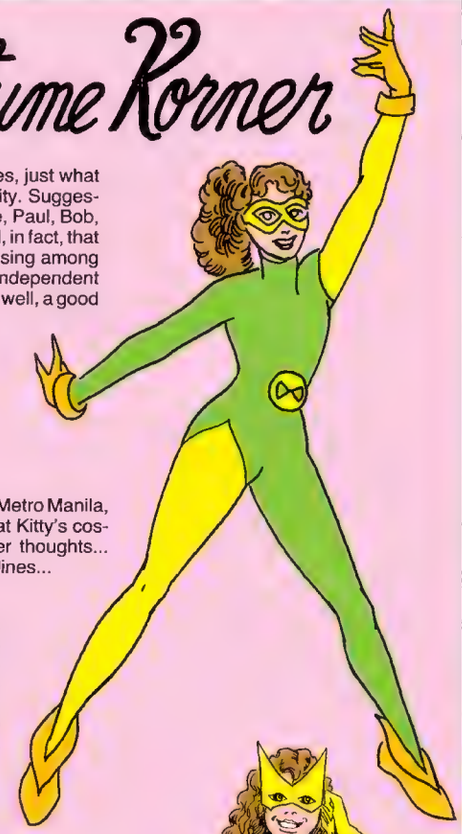
"Kitty's Kostume Korner" from *The Uncanny X-Men* #168

Kitty's Kostume Korner

Way back in 1981, we wondered in one of the letters pages, just what you readers thought Kitty would wear in her SPRITE identity. Suggestions poured in, burying my desk and providing Chris, Dave, Paul, Bob, Danny and me with hours of fun. Your designs were so good, in fact, that we wanted to share the best via the letters page, but choosing among them was an overwhelming task. So we brought in an independent panel of experts ranging from 14-years-old (Kitty's age) to... well, a good bit older. Below are their three favorite designs. Enjoy!

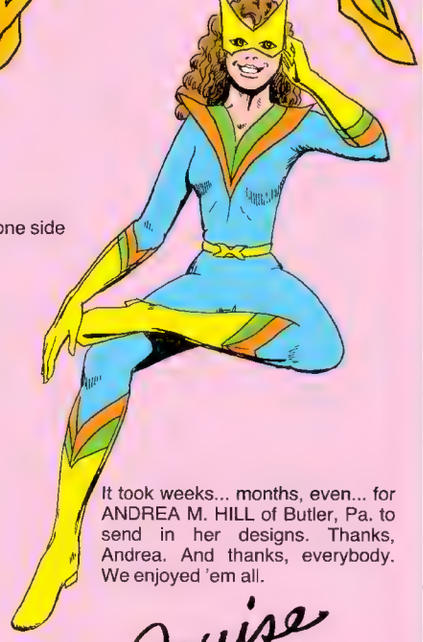
GEORGE GOZUM of Metro Manila, Phillippines figures that Kitty's costume design... and her thoughts... would be along these lines...

"Think I'll design a new costume — something new... different. I know — ASYMETRICS! I'll start with my hair (it gets in the way sometimes). I'd better add a mask to protect my secret identity. My code name's SPRITE and that's a water pixie. I know! I'll make the costume elf-like, starting with shoes that won't hinder my natural grace. I am a dancer! I'll base the colors on water sprites, too, and add a snazzy new 'X' symbol and VOILA... the all-new SPRITE!"



SENEN A. ANTONIO, also of the Phillippines, thinks Kitty would choose the costume below, since it is attractive as well as practical.

Leotard-type costume and tights — Kitty's a dancer
Arrow — to describe Kitty
Skirt cut high in the front for grace and ease of movement
Blues and whites — water sprite colors
Modified elfin shoes



It took weeks... months, even... for ANDREA M. HILL of Butler, Pa. to send in her designs. Thanks, Andrea. And thanks, everybody. We enjoyed 'em all.

Louise

The Uncanny X-Men #169 unused cover art by Paul Smith

The Uncanny X-Men: From the Ashes TPB (1990) cover
by Arthur Adams

$14.95 US
$17.95 CAN
£8.95 UK

CAN THE PHOENIX RISE—AGAIN?

Mutants are all around us. Some are good, others unspeakably evil. But they are all gifted—gifted with a unique X-Factor in their genetic make-up that makes them living weapons, manifesting itself through wondrous powers. And, even within this special community, there is a group that has distinguished itself . . . *the uncanny X-Men* . . . who have honed their awesome abilities and pledged them in the service of mankind!

One of their number—Jean Grey—had unwittingly attained power beyond conception. As Phoenix, her merest shrug could incinerate a world and as Phoenix she died. But now a woman, Madelyne Pryor, appears who could be Jean Grey's twin. Can she be the Phoenix reborn? The key to Madelyne Pryor's identity will either unlock the mutants' buried hearts or destroy them—utterly.

ISBN#:0-87135-6155

THE UNCANNY X-MEN • FROM THE ASHES • CLAREMONT • SMITH

FROM THE ASHES

CHRIS CLAREMONT
PAUL SMITH • BOB WIACEK
with
WALT SIMONSON • JOHN ROMITA, JR.

INTRODUCTION
BY CHRIS CLAREMONT
FROM *WOLVERINE TPB* (1987)

It began on the road, driving north along the California coast towards Los Angeles.

The San Diego Comic Convention had just ended, and Frank Miller and I were driving north up I-5. And, in desperation, as people will do on the road with miles and hours yet to go, when they verge on the terminally bored with little substantive relief in sight, we resorted to conversation.

So who's this Frank, you wonder, and wherefore did he pencil this book you're about to read?

Frank Miller is a ridiculously talented artist...

...who's also one of the best writers in the comics industry.

Usually, when writers are just starting out, it takes a while for them to gain their feet; they make their usual number of mistakes, they learn their trade by doing. Not Frank. Oh, he learned. The thing is, his first script was as good as most people's best. It didn't read like a first script and all of us wondered if he'd been doing this for years under a pseudonym or had some snarling fairy godmother sprinkling Dashiell Hammett pixie dust onto his typewriter keys. And then, he had the nerve—the unmitigated gall to get better. As for his art, I'll let it speak—most eloquently—for itself.

But I digress...

So, there we are, plodding up the California coast in our Hertz Mobile, talking about Wolverine. Now, in the character's original incarnation—as established in the *Incredible Hulk* #181 and later in *Giant-Size X-Men* #1—he was a pint-sized hellraiser with a hair-trigger temper. Sort of like synthesizing the entire destructive capability of the New York Giants' defensive squad—plus Mark Bavaro and Phil McConkey—in a package about two-thirds the size of Joe Morris. Someone you don't want to mess with, any which way, ever. From the start, he's been one of the most popular characters in X-Men and the suggestion had been made that we star him in his own limited series. And I, ever on the prod of artists, figured Frank would love to draw it. Frank wasn't so sure. For the most part, you see, Wolvie had been portrayed as a terminal psychotic, akin to human nitroglycerin, ready to explode into a berserker fury without warning, as likely to attack his friends and teammates as his foes. An okay character description, if you're heavily into the uni-dimensional people. The problem is, it doesn't leave you—as a writer—many places to go.

Now Frank, he said flat out that he wasn't much interested in drawing the adventures of a berserker psycho-killer. Which was fine with me, because neither was I in writing them. And then, I told him the idea that had been swirling about in my skull for some time—that the essence of Wolvie's character was a "failed samurai." To samurai, duty is all, selfless service the path to their ultimate ambition, death with grace. Every facet, every moment of their lives, is absolutely under control. Wolverine, however, is almost a primal life force, totally beyond control, as graceless as can be. The one might be considered the ultimate expression of humanity—wherein the will, the intellect, totally overmaster all other aspects of existence—while the other is the total animal.

All through that six-hour drive, we talked Wolvie's character—and that became one of the elements that made this story experience so refreshingly delightful. You see, in comics, most stories are constructed from plot outward. The writer comes up with a sequence of events, or a critical moment (from which others are derived, or to which those others build), into which the various characters are thrown, their characterizations derived from their interaction with those events. Plot ends up defining character. Nothing wrong with that, per se, unless that becomes the only way things are done.

In this case, though, Frank and I began by discussing the central character. Who was Wolverine? What made him tick? The only story parameter we acknowledged at that time was that we wanted to utterly, ruthlessly and seemingly irrevocably destroy him. And then, maybe, make him better. But even that was open to change, depending on how our discussions of his character went. And through the discussion, a mutual image of Wolverine emerged. One we both liked. One we both could relate to and deal with.

And deal with him we did, very nastily. And he hasn't been the same ever since.

A lot of people—readers and fellow comic professionals—have complained that Wolvie's lost a crucial edge, that he isn't the wild man psycho butcher he used to be; he's gotten too rational, too normal, he's lost the part of him that made him special and unique. It may be that they have a point, I don't know. It seems to me that a character cannot remain static, even in an ongoing, open-ended publishing format like comics. If you freeze a character into a certain set of parameters, usually for convenience—of other writers, of readers, of merchandisers, whatever—then before long that character runs the risk of becoming sterile. Writers—and ultimately readers—may stop thinking of the character as a vital, real, three-dimensional being and instead come to perceive him (or her) as an agglomeration of stock elements—plug 'em in, wind 'em up, turn him/her/them loose and put 'em through their stock paces. Nothing changes, nothing grows. Stories may still be technically exciting, but they've lost all heart: there's no passion, nothing to excite the readers and hold them interested. And how long then before the writer becomes bored, and the artist, and then ultimately the reader?

So, Frank and I took the character and from him built the story, using Wolverine himself to define the conflict, and then the structure of the story. And it was a whole lot of fun! One of the best I've written and, I'm happy to maintain with pardonable pride, one of the best I've seen Frank draw. This became what all of us in comics strive for—that special moment where writer's vision merges with penciler's, the two counter-balancing the weakness, to create a whole which is much, much greater than the sum of the parts. We put Wolvie through the wringer, and loved it! As, we hope, did our readers.

And that, in the final analysis, is what this crazy industry is all about.

(Now, if there was only some way of persuading Frank to do it again...?)

Chris Claremont
New York City
January 1987

AFTERWORD
BY FRANK MILLER
FROM *WOLVERINE TPB* (1987)

I hope that this is the first comic book you've read in a while. I hope you found it on a shelf in a real bookstore somewhere, and took a chance. I hope a lot of people are picking up comic books for the first time.

You see, a lot of people think comic books are just for kids, like Saturday morning cartoons. And many of them are, though they're usually better drawn and written. That's great, but it's hardly the whole story.

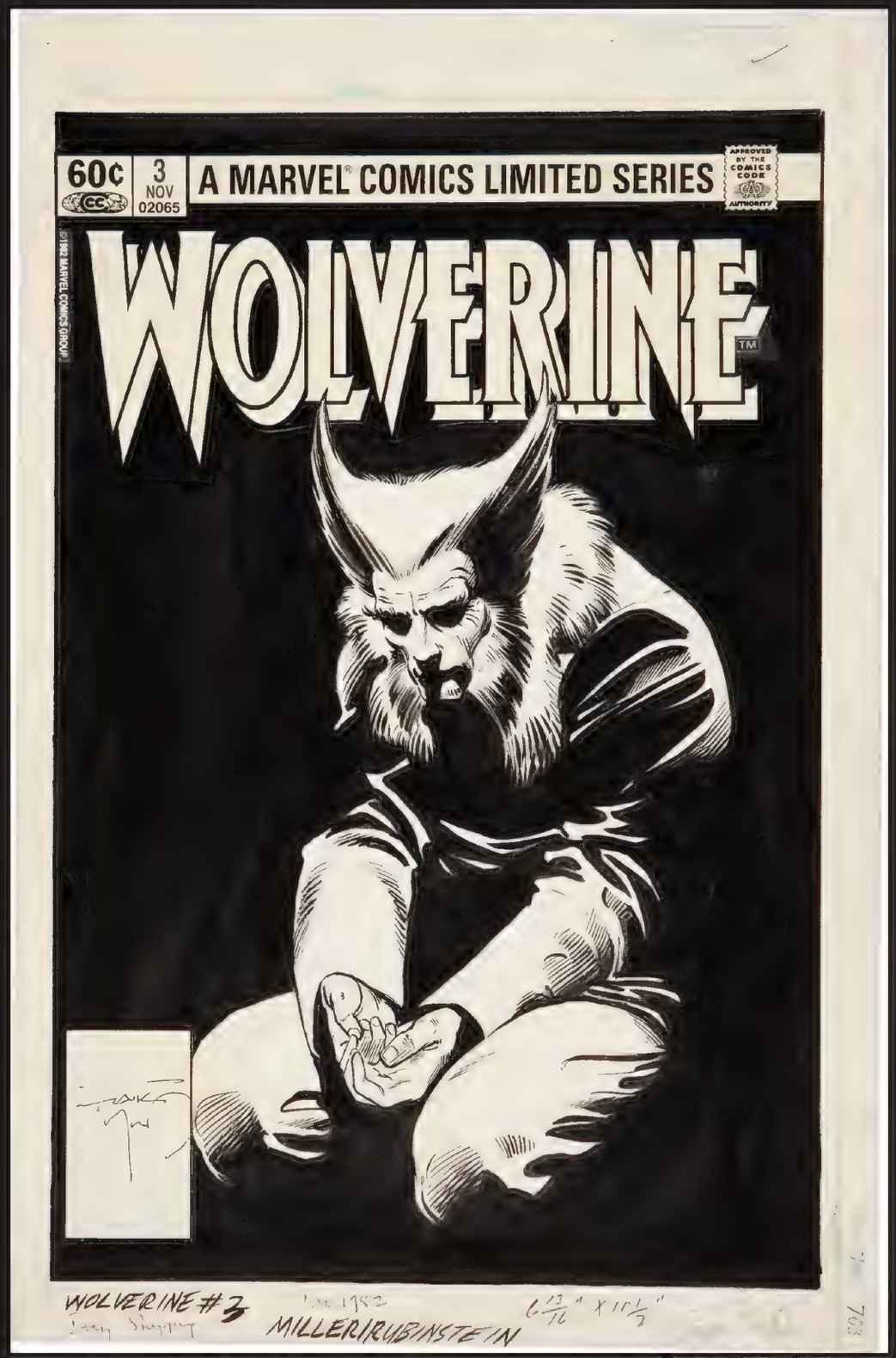
Maybe you've seen a story in your local newspaper or a spot on TV that told you about the new kinds of comics that are coming up, all kinds, many of which have the kind of intense character involvement and sophistication of plot that you'd expect from a novel. Maybe you've heard of Marvel's *Moonshadow* or DC's *Watchmen*. Comics are growing up, expanding the borders to include the kind of stories that people of any age might enjoy.

I hope you've enjoyed Wolverine. Chris and I had a lot of fun working on it. Just remember, if this is your first comic book in a while, that comics is a form for telling stories, as versatile and full of promise as any other.

Try another.

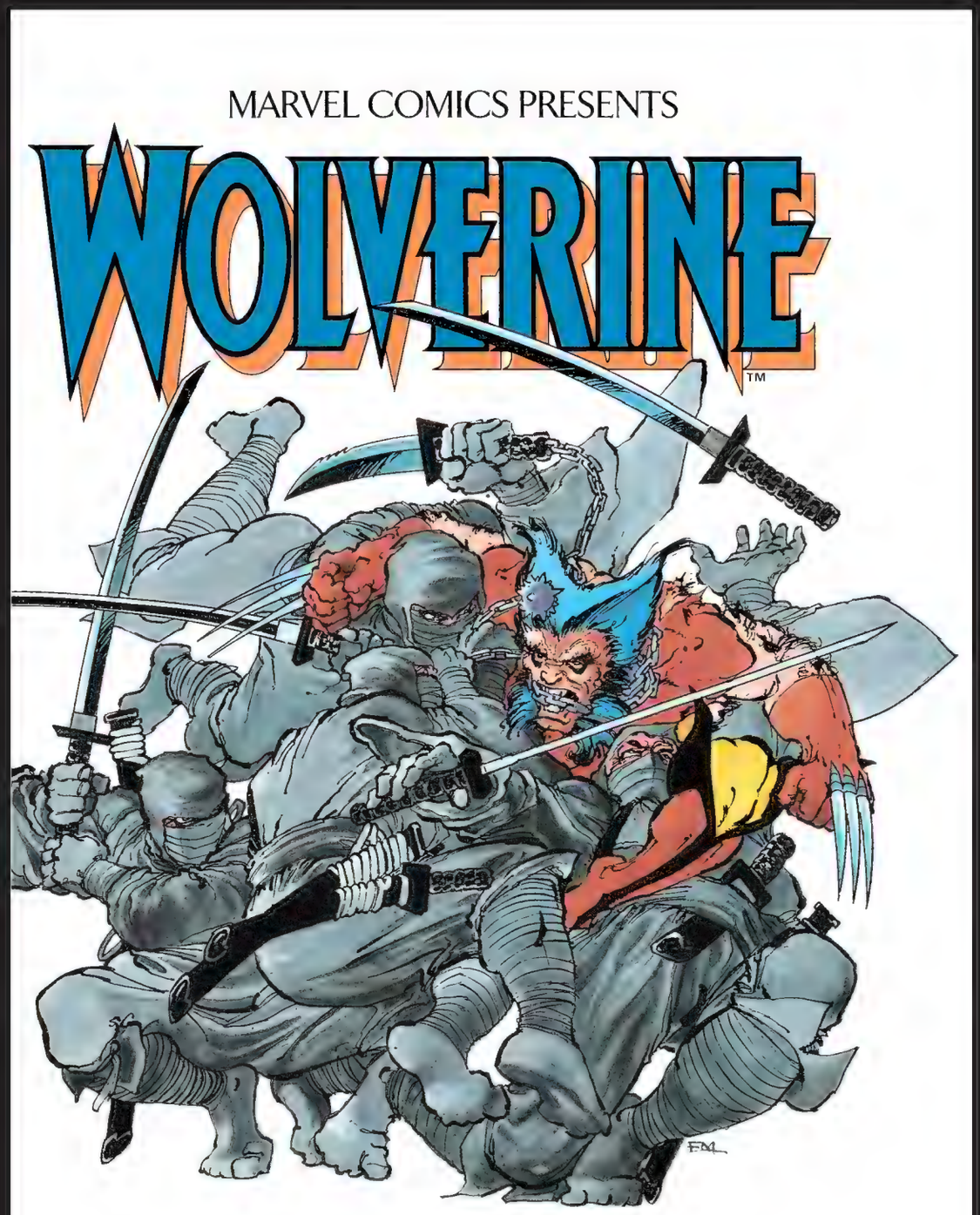
Frank Miller
Los Angeles 1987

Wolverine #3 cover original art
by Frank Miller & Joe Rubinstein



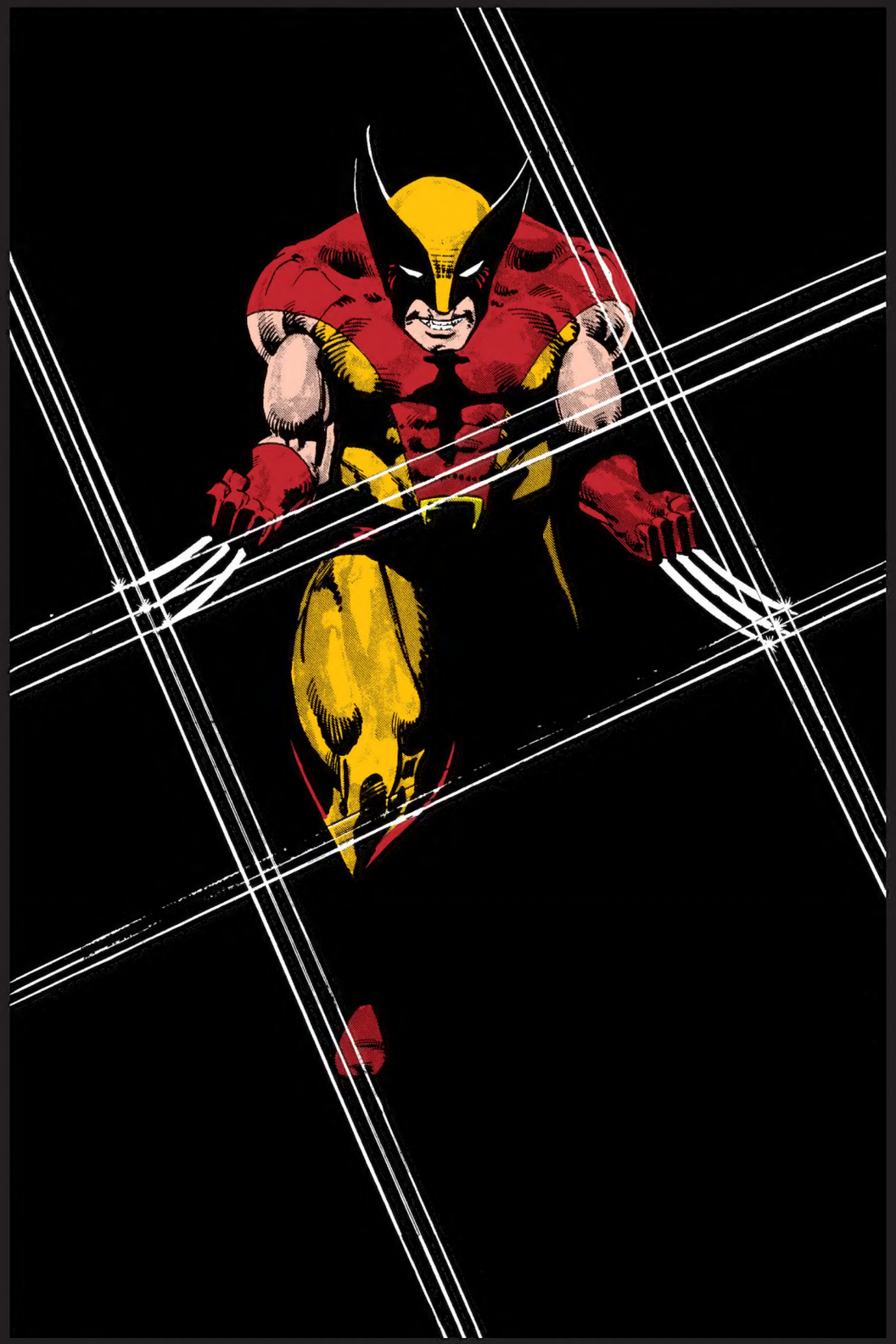
Courtesy HeritageAuctions.com

Wolverine TPB (1987) cover art
by Frank Miller & Lynn Varley



by Chris Claremont and Frank Miller

Wolverine pinup from *Classic X-Men* #22
by Frank Miller



BIOGRAPHIES

CHRIS CLAREMONT

It is hard to remember a time when the word "mutant" didn't correspond with the largest and most ardently followed franchise in comics, but in the mid-'70s the X-Men were naught but a forgotten team of misfits. Chris Claremont and his collaborators took this moribund property and issue by issue transformed it into a phenomenon now known the world over.

Claremont began his career in comics in the early '70s pitching in on issues of *Avengers*, *Daredevil* and *Incredible Hulk*, while also delivering several text stories to Marvel's black-and-white magazines. His first regular writing gig was *War Is Hell*, a "weird war" title that came to a close just as his run on *X-Men* and *Iron Fist* began. *Iron Fist*, which rolled out of the pages of *Marvel Premiere*, was done in concert with artist John Byrne, forming a key partnership that would pay big dividends later. Other high-profile projects from Claremont's first full decade in comics included *Marvel Preview*'s Starlord, *Ms. Marvel*, *Marvel Team-Up* (again with Byrne) and *John Carter: Warlord of Mars*.

But it was in the pages of *X-Men* where Claremont would change comics history. In tandem with artists Dave Cockrum and John Byrne, Claremont helped build a cornerstone franchise for Marvel. After writer Len Wein launched the newly updated series in 1975 with *Giant-Size X-Men* #1, Claremont was tasked with guiding the new adventures of the mutant misfits, and he did so by crafting layered stories that balanced crisp dialogue with high-octane action. Claremont placed a premium on characterization, a lofty goal in a team book with many players, but he did so deftly enough to spin a wide-ranging tapestry of characters, each of whom became fan favorites.

Leading breathless fans down the path of classics including "The Dark Phoenix Saga," "Days of Future Past," and *God Loves, Man Kills*, he helped build such an intense loyalty that it only made sense to spin-off the X-Men's success into new books. The first such spin-off was *The New Mutants*. Later in the decade, Claremont launched *Excalibur* with Alan Davis and established a regular series for Wolverine with John Buscema.

In 1990, he launched a new sister title for the main team of mutants with Jim Lee; *X-Men* #1 premiered to numbers that made it the highest-selling comic ever. After a long break from the company, Claremont returned to Marvel in 2000, and over the next ten years wrote the novelization of Bryan Singer's X-Men film, took on the Fantastic Four, and charted the adventures of Marvel's mutants across a variety of titles.

PAUL SMITH

Artist Paul Smith's friendly, nuanced illustration on *Uncanny X-Men* offered a memorable contrast between extended runs by Dave Cockrum and John Romita Jr. A product of Ralph Bakshi's animation studio, Smith took his talents to comics in the early '80s. His first work at Marvel included pin-up, fill-in and backup story art, but within a year of his arrival at the House of Ideas he had lined up an impressive gig following up Cockrum's second stint on the title. He stayed on *Uncanny* for a year, eventually passing the baton to John Romita Jr., but his run on the era's most popular title made a lasting impression on X-Men fans. He quickly followed with an equally stunning run on Roger Stern's *Doctor Strange*, where his art showcased his fondness for Steve Ditko's unearthly take on the Sorcerer Supreme. In 1985, Smith returned to the X-Men with the *X-Men/Alpha Flight* miniseries and a short run on *X-Factor.* Though known primarily for his work at Marvel, Smith's credits also include *Nexus*, *American Flagg!,* and two collaborations with writer James Robinson on DC's *The Golden Age* and Image's Eisner-nominated *Leave It To Chance*. His recent credits include issues of *She-Hulk*, *X-Men: First Class* and DC's *Spirit* revival.

BRENT ANDERSON

A fan of comics since childhood, Brent Anderson has enjoyed a long career in comics with his expressive, character-oriented linework. His first regular series, *Ka-Zar the Savage*, explored the Savage Land domain of Marvel's jungle hero. It was a gig the 25-year-old carried on for nearly two years, after turning down a recruiting bid from Chris Claremont to draw *Uncanny X-Men*. Despite declining the offer, Anderson nonetheless delivered a trio of fondly remembered X-Men stories as a guest artist. Beyond those three tales, however, Anderson has a bona fide X-Men classic under his belt, arguably the definitive X-Men story: *God Loves, Man Kills*. One of Marvel's evergreen stories, the themes of which continue to resonate today in comics and films, *God Loves, Man Kills* confronted the fear and prejudice at the heart of the X-Men metaphor with a striking humanity. Other highlights of the decade for Anderson include *Power Pack*, the cult favorite *Strikeforce: Morituri* and his creator-owned foray with writer Bruce Jones, *Somerset Holmes*, published by Pacific Comics. Since 1995, Anderson has collaborated with writer Kurt Busiek on the rich universe of *Astro City*, a groundbreaking series that won accolades including multiple Eisner and Harvey Awards.

FRANK MILLER

One of the boldest voices of a generation that pushed American comics into new creative and literary frontiers, Frank Miller broke into comics in 1978 illustrating stories in *Twilight Zone*, *Weird War Tales* and *John Carter, Warlord of Mars*. A Will Eisner acolyte ready to challenge the mainstream, Miller quickly moved on from short stories and single issues. With only his fifth Marvel credit, he took over as penciler on *Daredevil*. Teamed with inker/colorist Klaus Janson, Miller developed a dark and gritty world that brought the series back to its Hell's Kitchen roots. Miller's *Daredevil* was revolutionary, reintroducing pulp and crime genre elements into comics. Eleven issues into his run, Miller took over as writer and introduced the Greek assassin/love interest Elektra, who grew to become a major character in her own right.

As his *Daredevil* tenure came to a close in 1982, Miller penciled Wolverine's first solo series before moving to DC for the creator-owned *Ronin*. He returned to *Daredevil* in 1986 as writer of the acclaimed "Born Again" with artist David Mazzucchelli. Meanwhile, Miller was also making history at DC. He reunited with Janson to write and draw the landmark graphic novel *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*. Depicting the resurgence of a retired, middle-aged Batman, *Dark Knight* pulled no punches in exploring the character and the era's politics. The resultant acclaim brought new literary regard to the medium and Miller's take still influences the character today. Miller returned to the Daredevil mythos again by scribing the *Daredevil: Love and War* graphic novel and *Elektra: Assassin*, both painted by Bill Sienkiewicz.

After writing the seminal origin story *Batman: Year One*, Miller began a relationship with the upstart independent publisher Dark Horse. There, he wrote *Hard Boiled*, *Give Me Liberty*, *Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot* and *RoboCop vs. The Terminator*, which parlayed from his scriptwriting the *RoboCop 2* and *RoboCop 3* movie sequels. He also launched his crime series *Sin City* in *Dark Horse Presents*, which Miller has since co-directed with Robert Rodriguez in two feature film adaptations. In the meantime, Miller again revisited Marvel and Daredevil with the *Elektra Lives Again* graphic novel and the five-issue origin retelling *Daredevil: The Man Without Fear*. Miller's success at the movies with *Sin City* led to his graphic novel *300* being adapted into a blockbuster, and he also directed *The Spirit*. A recent return to DC resulted in *Batman: The Dark Knight Strikes Again* and *All Star Batman & Robin, the Boy Wonder*.

BRET BLEVINS

Bret Blevins' art style ranges from whimsical to dark, bringing a compelling emotional depth to his work across a wide range of titles. At the beginning of Blevins' career, he worked his way up from single-issue jobs to covers, and, most notably, film adaptations of *The Dark Crystal*, *Krull* and *The Last Starfighter* in *Marvel Super Special*. In late 1985, Blevins earned his first regular series, David Michelinie's six-issue Epic miniseries *The Bozz Chronicles*. In 1987, the regular assignments grew to include Cloak & Dagger in *Strange Tales* and a milestone run on *New Mutants*. Later credits included an Inhumans graphic novel with Ann Nocenti and extended runs on the early-'90s titles *Sleepwalker* and *Ghost Rider*. From there, Blevins moved to DC to draw *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* but soon after made a career change to join Warner Bros. animation, where he won two Emmy awards for storyboarding *Batman*, *Batman Beyond*, *Superman* and *Justice League* cartoons, among many others.

MICHAEL GOLDEN

Michael Golden was one of the most popular artists of the '80s, notable for the launch of *Micronauts*, a comic adaptation that proved more resilient than the original toy line, and for illustrating the debut of future X-Men fan-favorite Rogue. Starting outside the industry in commercial art, an artist peer remarked that Michael's work seemed well suited for comics. This inspired him to send samples to the industry's main publishers, and within weeks he had work at both Marvel and DC. Starting with no prior exposure to comic art, Golden's first published work appeared in 1977 issues of *House of Secrets*, *Batman Family* and *Mister Miracle*. His first work at Marvel was *Micronauts*, with interior work on the first dozen issues and covers for the next dozen. It was on *Avengers Annual* #10 that Golden worked with writer Chris Claremont introducing Rogue, one of the X-Men's most enduring characters. Charged with developing her look, Golden had received a rough sketch from another artist, but scrapped it and went in his own direction. The resulting character design, with her striking shock of white hair, resulted in one of the most memorable looks for a mutant since *Giant-Size X-Men* #1. A prolific cover artist for Marvel during this era, he also had memorable turns in *Marvel Fanfare* and *X-Men Annual* #7. In 1985, he collaborated with writer Larry Hama on *Bucky O'Hare*, a swashbuckling, sci-fi adventure from Continuity Studios, and a year later started drawing *The 'Nam*, a critically acclaimed and hard-hitting combat anthology. In recent years, Golden has been more active outside the comics industry, although fans still clamor for more of his artwork.

JOHN ROMITA JR.

Like his legendary father, John Romita Jr. has become a comic-art master, establishing a powerful style uniquely his own. His life in comics began early, when as an adolescent he helped his father design the Spider-Man villain the Prowler. His first published work—cover art for Marvel UK and "Chaos at the Coffee Bean!" in *Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #11—showed that he'd learned much from his father's figure drawing and storytelling sense. His first full-length project was a KISS feature in *Marvel Super-Special* #5. In the summer of 1978, he began a years long parternship on *Iron Man* with David Michelinie and Bob Layton. It was during his first *Iron Man* break that Romita Jr. took on full-time art duties on *Amazing Spider-Man* for the first of multiple acclaimed runs. During his Spidey tenure he also helped launch *Dazzler* and penciled the first Marvel miniseries, *Marvel Super Hero Contest of Champions*. In 1983, Romita Jr. joined Chris Claremont's *Uncanny X-Men*, taking over the industry's most popular comic for a three-year run that saw his art dramatically evolve in tone. After a stint on the New Universe series *Starbrand*, he rebounded with a pair of *Amazing Spider-Man* issues that included Peter Parker's proposal to Mary Jane Watson. Next, Romita Jr. began a run on *Daredevil* with writer Ann Nocenti, introducing Typhoid Mary and establishing himself as one of the definitive *Daredevil* artists. After a third run on *Iron Man*, his credits included *Punisher War Zone*, *Daredevil: The Man Without Fear* with Frank Miller, a return to *Uncanny X-Men*, and long runs on *Spider-Man*, *Thor* and *Peter Parker: Spider-Man*. As the new century dawned, the ever more popular Romita Jr. kept adding to his superstar resume with stints on *Amazing Spider-Man* with J. Michael Straczynski, *Wolverine* with Mark Millar, *Eternals* with Neil Gaiman, and the *World War Hulk* event. His collaboration with Millar spawned their creator-owned series *Kick-Ass*, which led to a blockbuster feature film. In recent years, he has returned once more to *Amazing Spider-Man*, helped relaunch *Avengers* with Brian Michael Bendis and *Captain America* with Rick Remender, and contributed to the blockbuster crossover *Avengers vs. X-Men*.

WALTER SIMONSON

Walter Simonson mixed the power of Jack Kirby comics with an experimental European influence to produce a visual style that made him one of his generation's foremost innovators. After achieving acclaim for DC's "Manhunter" feature in *Detective Comics*, Simonson moved to Marvel's black-and-white magazine line where he illustrated an adaptation of Robert E. Howard's "The Hyborean Age" and penciled the first three issues of *Rampaging Hulk*. Next came a yearlong stint on *Thor* that would be far from his last encounter with the Asgardian hero. Simonson soon made a decisive shift to sci-fi. Adaptations of *Close Encounters of the Third Time* for Marvel and *Alien: The Illustrated Story* in *Heavy Metal* were followed by runs on *Battlestar Galactica*, which featured Simonson's first writing credits, and *Star Wars*. Simonson continued to develop his craft as a writer on Marvel's *Raiders of the Lost Ark* adaptation and *Marvel Graphic Novel* #6: *Star Slammers*, a concept revived from his art school days that he wrote, penciled and inked. In 1982, Simonson teamed with writer Chris Claremont on the DC/Marvel crossover team-up of the X-Men and New Teen Titans. Shortly thereafter, he began his epochal run scripting and penciling *Thor*, the first issue of which introduced Beta Ray Bill and became one of the most highly acclaimed titles of the period. His collaboration with his wife, Louise, on *X-Factor* included the introduction of Archangel and Apocalypse. Later, the husband and wife team would write the *Havok & Wolverine: Meltdown* prestige miniseries. In the early '90s, Simonson had a memorable run writing and drawing *Fantastic Four*. Other credits from this era included the *Iron Man: 2020* one-shot and *Avengers*. More recent work has included *Orion* at DC, *Elric: The Making of a Sorceror* with Michael Moorcock and *Avengers* and *Indestructible Hulk* for Marvel.

Biographies researched and written by John Rhett Thomas

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RAWHIDE KID VOLS. 1-2
SGT. FURY VOLS. 1-4
THE SILVER SURFER VOLS. 1-2
THE SUB-MARINER VOLS. 1-5
THE MIGHTY THOR VOLS. 1-13
WARLOCK VOLS. 1-2
THE X-MEN VOLS. 1-8
THE UNCANNY X-MEN VOLS. 1-9

THE MARVEL AGE

It was August 1961 and change was hitting the newsstands. *Fantastic Four* #1 did not feature the squeaky-clean heroes of yesteryear. These were real characters placed in extraordinary circumstances. They lived together, they fought among themselves—and sometimes, they even lost to the bad guys. This was more than a change in attitude: It was the beginning of something entirely different—the Marvel Age of Comics!

Thanks to the fertile imaginations of Stan Lee, Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and others, an unending list of heroes followed the FF with ever-increasing acclaim and popularity: the Amazing Spider-Man, the Mighty Thor, the Incredible Hulk, Daredevil, Iron Man and the X-Men, to name but a few. These were the Marvel heroes, born of conflict and a continuous struggle to balance human lives with superhuman responsibilities.

The *Marvel Masterworks* series was created to give comic-book readers everywhere the chance to experience the greatest comics the world has known as they were originally presented.

THE GOLDEN AGE

As the Great Depression wore on and the specter of war hung over the heads of all Americans, a new entertaining escape from the newspapers' horrifying realities was born: the comic book. Within their four-color pages, larger-than-life super heroes could make short work of America's foes, giving readers of all ages hope for victory against the real-life enemies that faced the United States.

At the forefront of this new medium was Timely Comics, a young company staffed by such legendary talents as Carl Burgos, Bill Everett, Joe Simon, Jack Kirby and Stan Lee. These skilled writers and artists created a vast array of characters that would give rise to the Marvel Universe!

GOLDEN AGE ALL-WINNERS VOLS. 1-4
GOLDEN AGE CAPTAIN AMERICA VOLS. 1-6
GOLDEN AGE DARING MYSTERY VOLS. 1-2
GOLDEN AGE HUMAN TORCH VOLS. 1-3
GOLDEN AGE MARVEL COMICS VOLS. 1-7
GOLDEN AGE MYSTIC COMICS VOL. 1
GOLDEN AGE SUB-MARINER VOLS. 1-3
GOLDEN AGE U.S.A. COMICS VOLS. 1-2
GOLDEN AGE YOUNG ALLIES VOLS. 1-2

THE ATLAS ERA

Seeing super heroes waning, Timely Comics evolved into Atlas Comics and took on a vast new range of genres: science-fiction tales of outer space adventures and unimaginable monsters; realistic war comics; buxom jungle heroines; horror comics that would become the center of a moral panic that rocked the industry; and romance comics for the emerging teen audience. Even the classic costumed heroes of the '40s retooled to take on the threat of Communism. From Western gunfighters to crime to horror, Atlas had it all!

ATLAS ERA BATTLEFIELD VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA BLACK KNIGHT/YELLOW CLAW VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA HEROES VOLS. 1-3
ATLAS ERA JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA JUNGLE ADVENTURE VOLS. 1-3
ATLAS ERA MENACE VOL. 1
ATLAS ERA STRANGE TALES VOLS. 1-6
ATLAS ERA TALES TO ASTONISH VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA TALES OF SUSPENSE VOLS. 1-4
ATLAS ERA VENUS VOL. 1

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